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Lele

# Ties—Human and Divine

BY

### B. L. FARJEON

AUTHOR OF "FOR THE DEFENCE," "BLADE O' GRASS," ETC., ETC.

Authorized Edition

NEW YORK

JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY
150 WORTH STREET, CORNER MISSION PLACE

Every work in this series is published by arrangement with the author

Issued Weekly. Annual Subscription, \$15.00. June 16, 1891. Entered at New York Post Office as second-class matter.

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PZ3 F229Ti

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# TIES, HUMAN AND DIVINE.

THE FIRST LINK -- SUPPLIED BY MR. MILLINGTON OF SHEPHERD'S BUSH.

#### CHAPTER I.

It is now four years since I received a note from Mr. Haldane, of Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park, requesting me to call upon him on a little matter of business. Under ordinary circumstances my reply would have been that I had given up business, and that I regretted I could not tear myself away from my garden and birds, and my pipe and newspaper, of all of which I am particularly fond. I should have written politely, of course, for I had accepted some commissions from Mr. Haldane in times gone by which had put a few pounds in my purse, but I had my own special reasons for reading his note twice over before deciding what to do about it. And having read the letter a second time I put it in my pocket, and stepped into my garden in a brown study.

When a man is in a brown study, a pipe assists him, so I lit mine; and motion assists him, so I paced the nicely gravelled paths, up one side and down the other, and up and down again and again, revolving the subject in my mind without arriving at a definite conclusion, although the weights in the scales were not quite equal. It was my lark

which brought me to a full stop. As a rule the notes of an imprisoned lark are apt to become a little too shrill, as if it were indignantly protesting against being confined in so narrow a space, but this is not the case with my bird, whose notes are remarkably soft and dulcet. I suppose it is mere sentiment for me to say that I could never bring myself to eat larks in a pie, or roasted before the fire, which I regarded as babarism. I would as soon eat canaries, which I never heard are served up as delicacies on rich men's tables. Big birds I like, but these tiny creatures, which in my mind are associated with blue clouds and flowers and summer days, should be allowed to go free to gladden the world with their harmony. You will see by this remark that I am no better than my neighbors, and that I preach what I do not practise; otherwise I should open the cage of my lark, whose outdoor life is passed just below my bedroom window, and who wakes me in the morning to remind me that the most beautiful part of the day is waiting for me. It is a summons not to be neglected, so up I get and work in the garden till George, or the little maid in our service, comes and tells me that breakfast is ready.

This chat about larks is wandering away a bit from Mr. Haldane's note, but I promise you I'll not digress from what I have to tell oftener than I can help, for I know from experience how tantalising it is to have the interest of a story interfered with by matter that does not pro-

perly belong to it.

Well, as I was saying, when I went into the garden the lark was piping away most industriously, just as though it was training for a singing match, and hoped to win for its master a sum of money, or a belt, or a plated tankard, and it continued to pipe as I trod the new gravel down. But suddenly it stopped, and the silence that ensued was so surprising that I stopped too, and my brown study came to an end. However, I had not even then made up my mind about Mr. Haldane's note, and my fingers were in my pocket twiddling it at the very moment that George walked out of the house and joined me.

"Hallo, George," said I.
"Hallo, father," said he.

George is the only child I have, and but for him I should not have read the note twice over, and should not have paced the garden in a brown study.

Let me set things clear about myself and him-as to

what kind of persons we are, I mean.

As a young man I started upon the active duties of life in the service of Her Gracious Majesty; enamoured of red coats and drums I enlisted for a soldier, and being wounded in one of our little wars in Africa was sent home invalided, unfit for further service. Two of my fingers were amputated, and I could not handle a musket. Then somehow I became associated with an old friend, who kept a private inquiry office. It luckily happened about that time that a small legacy fell to me, and my old friend proposed that I should invest it in his business and become a partner. I agreed, and we were so successful that I retired at the end of sixteen years with an income sufficient for my wants. The business is still carried on by my partner in his own name, Barlow, with a Co. tacked to it. My name, Millington, was never used in the concern. When I sailed from England for Africa I left a wife and child behind me, and when I returned my wife was dead, which was a severe blow, for she was a good creature, and we loved each other. But my child George was spared, and a great blessing the young fellow has been to me.

He is a working carpenter, in favour with his employers, as he deserves to be, being a good workman, sober, steady, and loyal. A year or so before I received Mr. Haldane's note my lad was sent down to Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park, to assist in some alterations there. He was away three months, and he came back mad in love with a maid in the service of Mr. Haldane's only daughter, Miss Agnes Haldane. What had passed between George and pretty Rachel Diprose—for pretty she undeniably was according to the picture which George brought home—I did not exactly know, but I had an uncomfortable suspicion that the girl was playing fast and loose with him, as girls often do with

straightforward men like my lad. They corresponded, George writing once a week, and Rachel about once in three, which I did not consider fair; but George saw nothing unfair in it, and was wild with delight when a letter arrived for him from Chudleigh Park. He did not show the letters to me, nor did I expect he should. One reason, I think, why I was suspicious of Rachel Diprose was that she wrote too good a hand for a lady's maid. It is an odd confession, but I should have been better pleased if she had written more like a servant who had received an imperfect education. I don't pretend to justify my feelings towards Rachel upon evidence so slight, but it is right

to be fair and square upon such matters.

I had, as was to be expected, a great desire to see the girl who, if my boy's hopes were to be realised, was to become my daughter-in-law, but she had no friends in London, and had, in fact, never been in the city. Consequently there was no house in which she could stop except at an inn or a lodging-house, which would not be proper for a single young girl. It would not do to ask her to stop in mine, there being no elderly female to look after her, and George sleeping in it—though, for the matter of that, he could have got a room elsewhere; but I decided that it would not do. Mother Grundy, who is as ill-natured and cross-grained in Shepherd's Bush, where George and I live, as in Mayfair, would have been up in arms, and all sorts of things would have been said. Nor would it look well for me to go expressly to Chudleigh Park to take observations of Rachel Diprose. She might think I was come to spy upon her, for the purpose of seeing if she was good enough for my lad, and this was a proceeding which any girl of spirit would resent. Rachel had a spirit of her own; I gathered that from George's talk of her; and I didn't think any the worse of her because of it. She would be all the more likely to grow into a sensible woman, able to manage a house and family. Then there was another difficulty. Although the young people corresponded with each other I could not get George to tell me whether there was really and positively a regular engagement between them.

That is how the matter stood when George joined me in the garden, and I don't think I have wasted many words in explaining it.

"I've got something to tell you, old man," I said.

It was a habit of mine, when I was about to speak of anything out of the common run to call him old man, and George invariably pulled himself together when I so addressed him.

"Fire away, father," he said.

"I have received a letter from Chudleigh Park," I said.

He turned very red in the face. "From any one in particular?" he asked, trying to speak in a careless tone, though his heart was thumping against his waistcoat.

"Yes," I answered, "from someone in particular."

"Not from Rachel!" he cried.

"No, old man, not from her. What should she have to write to me about? It's from Mr. Haldane."

"Am I concerned in it?"

"Not that I know of. He says he would like to see me upon business."

"Oh, upon business; but you have given it up"

"That's so, George, but I've a great mind to go and see what he wants with me."

"There's no harm in that."

"Not a bit, and I can kill two birds with one stone."

"What is the other bird, father?"

"Well, old man, I should like to see Rachel, and this letter gives me the opportunity. If you've any objection, I won't go."

"What objection can I have? I want you to see her."
And then he broke out into rhapsodies, which I listened to

with patient affection.

"Did I ever tell you," I said, when he had run himself out, "that I had some acquaintance with Mr. Haldane when I was partner in Barlow & Co.?"

"No; I was not aware of it."

"There was no occasion to mention it. He put some commissions in our way, and what we did for him was confidential."

"Of course; and you're not the man to betray a confidence."

"I hope not, my lad; but it's not so much for his sake as for yours that I am inclined to go to Chudleigh Park."

"It is very good of you, father. Yes, go."

"Give the subject a little thought, old man. When I am at Manor Hall, Rachel will be sure to hear my name."

"I suppose she will."

"And she'll be sure to recognize it."

"I suppose so."

"Even if she did not, it would look strange for me to go and come away without introducing myself to her. It would make it rather awkward when we meet at some future time."

"It would. Just let me think it over."

He did as I did when I was in a brown study. He paced the nicely gravelled paths up one side and down the other, and up and down again. The lark was piping all the time, and had he taken as many turns as I did, would have stopped short, and pulled him up, as it did me. But George came to the end of his brown study quicker than I did.

"I ought not to keep you in the dark," he said, taking me by the elbow joint, and setting me slowly in motion there is just room in the paths for the pair of us to walk side by side. "You want to know how it stands between Rachel and me."

"It would be the best, old man, before I start. I should

know then where I was."

Well, father, this is how it stands," said George, for all the world as if he was going to tell me something quite new; "I love Rachel dearly."

"Yes, old man."

"And I have told her so."

"When you were at the Hall, George?" I remarked.

"Yes, father."

"And since then in your letters to her?"

"Yes. It seems to me," he said, with a tender laugh, "that I am always telling her. And she loves me."

"Your heart being set upon her, I am glad to hear it."

"She is the dearest, sweetest girl in all the world," cried he, enthusiastically, "and I have only one object in life—to make her my wife."

I confess that a little jealous twinge smote me at these words. He had only one object in life-pretty Rachel Diprose. Then I, his father, to whom he was dearer than life itself, was nothing by the side of this girl, who had stolen his heart from me. My twinge of jealousy was natural, but I am thankful to say it did not last long. Was it not in the course of nature? Did I not love the girl I married better than all the rest of the world? Would not I have given up parents, brothers, sisters, and all my other relations, for the sake of the girl who had stolen my heart? I cooled down, and looked at the matter in a more sensible light.

"You will never forget me, George?"

"Forget you, dear old dad," he cried, somewhat reproachfully. "Why, how is that possible? The dearest father a fellow ever had!" He put his lips to my face and kissed me. Some persons think it unmanly for a man to kiss a man; I do not, when the men are father and son. "Now, put that out of your head once and forever."

"I do, my dear boy. I am a stupid old ass."

"Stow it, father."

"I am—to be jealous of a girl who is going to make my lad happy. I hope she'll be worthy of you,

George."

"I hope I may be worthy of her. When you see her, you will say the same." (As if that was likely. As if to see a woman was to prove her worth—woman who has been likened to a chameleon, and her tears to a crocodile's ? Not that I entertain a poor opinion of the sex; but in the case of Rachel Diprose, I would wait before I passed judgment.) "Now I will explain," continued George. It is like this. We love each other truly, but when I speak to her of a regular engagement, and of a ring-which I've got in my pocket, having taken the measure of her inger-she says, 'No, George, if we were regularly engaged you would have a right to call upon me to marry you. And

I never intend to marry—never, George, though I love you dearly—till my young lady is happily settled."
"Isn't that rather hard on you?" I asked.

"I should have preferred it the other way," he replied, with a cheerful smile. "But I love her all the more for her faithfulness to Miss Haldane. It isn't a bad quality, is it, dad?"

"It is a very fine quality," I answered. "Perhaps you can tell me whether there is any likelihood of Miss Haldane

being soon happily settled?"

"I don't quite know," said George, rather ruefully. "Things seem a bit muddled. What Rachel lets out to me is private, and mustn't be mentioned; but I've got an idea that Mr. Haldane wants his daughter to marry a gentleman she doesn't care for."

"That's bad. Has she set her heart on someone else?" George pursed his lip, and I did not press the point.

shall start for Chudleigh Park to-morrow."

"All right, father. Give Rachel my love, and say I'm longing to see her. O, I may as well tell you that there's to be fine doings in the park to-morrow. It's Miss Haldane's birthday, and there'll be games and prizes, and cake and tea for the people in the village. You will be there in time for all the fun of the fair."

#### CHAPTER II.

It would be difficult to find in all Buckinghamshire, where it is situated, and indeed in all England, a more picturesque and finer estate than Chudleigh Park. My training was not a literary one, and I haven't the gift of describing scenery well, men and women being more in my way, but you may be able to draw the picture for yourself out of the following bald material, An enclosed park of a hundred acres or so, at the principal gate of which is the keeper's lodge, an ivy-covered cottage twinkling with diamonded windows. There are footpaths in all directions,

and a broad carriage-road leads to the doors of the old Manor House, which is built in the Tudor style. The spaces of grass and velvet moss stretching around as far as one can see are wonderfully well kept, not the least sign of litter or disorder meeting the eye whichever way it turns. Upland and lowland are dotted with fine old oaks, and on the east side of the park, where it joins Chudleigh Woods, is a broad lake covered with lilies. Midway across this lake a rustic bridge saves you the trouble of walking to either end, and the moment you are on the other side you plunge into the tangles of a lovely English forest. It is of vast extent, stretching for miles; there are acres of foreign ferns, and acres of wild flowers, and it would be hard to say at which period of the year the woods are most beautiful.

This is about as much as I am able to set down of the beauties of Mr. Haldane's estate. Many a man feels what he cannot describe, and that is the case with me, but I think I have said enough to show that Chudleigh Park is a place in which Nature seems to invite a man to happiness. But black care finds its way into palaces as well as into hovels, and I am not at all sure with respect to this visitor, whether the poor man's abode hasn't the best of it.

I had written to Mr. Haldane to say that I was coming down to Chudleigh Park, but as I did not mention the time or day of my arrival I felt myself free for a few hours when I reached the village. This enabled me to view the festivities in which the inhabitants were indulging. It was a declared holiday all over the place, and I found myself in the midst of the familiar features of a country fair. Rather a second-hand exhibition, it is true, but there was no lack of fun. Some caravans had come, and were doing good business. The outside shows, of course, were the main attraction. There were the fat woman and the man skeleton, and the coil of deadly cobras; there were clowns, and dwarfs, and giants, and acrobats; and there was a tamer of wild beasts, with his foot on a tiger, holding two lions by the throat, and glaring at a dozen others, who, but for his eagle eye, would have torn him to pieces. Making my way through these temptations, I reached the lodge

gates and passed into the park which surrounded the Manor House. There the entertainments were of a higher quality. A programme had been drawn out and printed, a copy of which I obtained. The chief feature of this programme was prizes for humble people. A cricket match was being played, serious and comic races were to be run, poles to be climbed, the school children were to sing and recite, and there were prizes for everybody it seemed, in money and books and articles for home use and decoration. Very old and very young people were especially catered for. The velvet spaces of the beautiful park were gay with flags and carriages and music. Some really creditable waxworks were being exhibited; there were two capital Punch and Judy shows; here a conjuror, surrounded by a delighted crowd, was displaying his skill, and at a little distance was a tent in which a fortune-teller revealed the past and foretold the future. In the evening there was to be a grand open-air tea, at which the inmates of the Manor House and their friends would assist, and after sunset there was to be a grand display of fireworks. Nothing was spared to contribute to the enjoyment of the work and tradespeople of the village, and I could not help wondering at the thoughtfulness and consideration shown in these preparations for the humble folk who were in a measure dependent upon the family residing in the Manor House for any prosperity which might fall to their lot. For I had not long been in Chudleigh Park before I learned that Mr. Haldane was not merely a rich gentleman living in private splendour upon his income; he was more king than master of the vast estate, and he exercised a feudal power over those who lived on it. This surprised me, he being a commoner. I was aware that in parts of England there were descendants of old families who wielded such a power, and whose reign over their lands was as absolute as that of a monarch, but that a commoner should do so was a new experience to me. I heard Mr. Haldane spoken of as a proud and haughty gentleman, arrogant, intolerable, and dangerous to thwart, as one who was feared rather than loved. What, then, was the secret of this open-

hearted holiday-making, in which a sympathetic desire to make those beneath him happy was so conspicuous? I soon discovered how this came about. The credit did not belong to Mr. Haldane, but to his daughter Agnes. From what I gathered, the whole idea and the carrying of it out were her work. A special celebration of her birthday being promised her, she had succeeded in obtaining from her father another promise that the manner of its celebration should be entirely of her choosing. These promises given, Mr. Haldane did not recede from them when his daughter laid her plans before him; it is not in my power to say whether he acceded graciously to the programme, but accede he did, and the result was before me. Of course, in arriving at this definite conclusion I had to exercise my judgment and to place constructions upon chance remarks I heard as I strolled through the grounds, but I had not the least doubt that I had hit the nail on the head. Wherever I went I heard nothing but praise of Miss Haldane's sweetness and goodness, and it was something in favor of Rachel Diprose that she should be so firmly attached to a mistress for whom every one had a good word.

"Bless her sweet face!" said an old woman. "She's an angel from heaven!" And then she recounted a story of kind deeds which made my heart warm as I listened with my back partly turned, for I did not wish to draw attention upon myself. There was no harm in my listening; what the old dame said was for everybody's ears, and her gratitude was so profound that she would have trumpeted it to all the world had it been in her power. Her story was followed by others from those who had received kindnesses at Miss Haldane's hands. Generally in such scenes there is to be detected an element of dissent or discontent form some carper, a discordant note which mars the harmony, but it was not so here: the affection expressed for the young lady at the Manor House was perfect and sincere.

This set me thinking. Hitherto I had felt no curiosity concerning the unrevealed matter of business upon which I had been summoned to Chudleigh Park, and I had

assented to Mr. Haldane's request to see me for the sole reason that I desired to make the acquaintance of Rachel Diprose and judge for myself whether she was a girl likely to make my son happy. But now my attention wandered from her to the master of the estate. I had become interested in his daughter, and should be glad of an opportunity to serve her. Why this thought should obtrude itself in connection with my mission, the particulars of which I

had yet to learn, I may be permitted to explain.

Mr. Haldane had requested me to call upon him on a little matter of business. Well and good; that sounded innocent enough, and as if there was not much in it. But I knew better; my experience had taught me that there must be a great deal in it. Mr. Haldane wished to see me, and had selected me as his agent, because of my previous connection with a private inquiry office which had already executed some commissions for him. Now, when a gentleman goes to such a source for assistance, the matter he discloses is in every instance a private matter which he is anxious to keep from public knowledge, and in nearly every instance which he wishes to keep from the knowledge of his immediate family. I use the words "immediate family" advisedly, my connection with the firm of Barlow & Co., apart from my experience of human nature, having taught me a great deal which would greatly disturb persons of a delicate turn of mind to know. What concerns the gentleman directly concerns his immediate family indirectly; if he fears exposure, be sure there is some disgrace attaching to it, and disgrace to him means disgrace to them. Why, there are numbers of offices in London which are filled with ghosts and skeletons. You enter one and see neatly arranged on shelves a number of tin boxes, each securely locked, and each with a name or mark upon it, denoting to whom it belongs. The place you stand in is a sepulchre. The boxes, smothered with dust, upon which you gaze, are coffins in which ugly skeletons are buried. Open one and up the mystery jumps and stares you in the face, shocking your sensibilities and causing you to raise your hands in amazement at the

revelation. What! Your old friend, whose name shall not be mentioned here, who poses before the world as the pink of morality, as a man of stainless character and honor, a philanthropist, perhaps, or a statesman, or a teacher of morals, whose homilies upon conscience edify the public—is it possible that he could have been guilty of this foul wrong? Quite possible, my friend. Do not be too curious to pry into the hidden life of the man or woman in whose society you delight, and whose presence in your home gives pleasure to you and your wife and children. Turn

your eyes inwards, and let sleeping ghosts lie.

And here a word in self-defence. I am aware that harpies are everywhere to be found whose aim it is to discover some incident in a man's career which does not reflect credit upon him, and the knowledge of which may be used as a means of extorting money from him, under threat of exposure. Unfortunately there are few persons of middle age who have not at some time or other been guilty of error, and a wide field is therefore open to these human vultures, who thrive upon the folly and misery of their fellow creatures. I could mention the names of established firms who make a specialty of this kind of discreditable business. Men and women who have been more sinned against than sinning are hunted down, and so tortured and robbed and threatened that their lives are made one long despair. I wish some fitting punishment could be devised for the mongrels who pursue these methods, but I fear that erring human nature will continue to supply them with the weapons with which they fight their infamous battles. On the other hand, there are firms whose business is carried on in a fashion as honorable as its peculiar nature will allow, and who would as soon commit murder as trade upon the secrets which come into their possession. The confidences entrusted to them are sacred. Such a firm is Barlow & Co.; its transactions have always been conducted in a respectable and honorable spirit, and I, as once a member of it, and speaking for those who now conduct it, say that they or I would scorn to take advantage of any lady or gentleman whose private

affairs have been confided to our keeping. So much for myself. I have never done, and never shall do, anything of which I have reason to be ashamed. Even if I had no son George to keep me straight I should not wander into crooked paths, whatever temptation might be held out to me.

Well, then, I argued this way. Mr. Haldane had sought my services in a matter which, dragged before the public, would cause unhappiness to the young lady who seemed to be loved by everyone who knew her, and who was spoken of as an angel from heaven. Interested in her happiness was a young girl my son George worshipped. For his sake, for my own, for the sake of Rachel Diprose, and last, but not least, for the sake of sweet Miss Haldane. I would undertake the task which Mr. Haldane had it in his mind to entrust to me. When Miss Haldane was happily settled Rachel would consent to make my George happy. It was clearly my duty, therefore, to do what I could towards Miss Haldane's happy settlement in life. A roundabout way of reasoning, I dare say, and founded upon mere conjecture. How far I was right or wrong will

be seen as we go on.

I had wandered out of the beaten paths during my musings, and now I wandered into them again, and mixed with the holiday folk. Hearing the voices of children singing I walked forward and stood on the outskirts of the circle of people who were listening to the pleasant performance. The school children were marshalled in order, and had just commenced what I afterwards was told was an original song composed by a local poet in honor of Miss Haldane, set to an original air composed by the local organist. It being impracticable to bring an organ into the park, the organist, who conducted his own composition, had provided himself with a violin, upon which he performed to my satisfaction—not that I am much of a judge -and apparently to the satisfaction of the gentry who stood upon the rise of a green hill, witnesses of the pretty The children, who all had new frocks on, had been carefully drilled, and sang admirably. The schoolmaster

kept them in line, and the organist flourished his bow; and standing by himself was the local poet, with his hands clasped, listening to his verses in a state of agonised rapture, convinced, no doubt, that the eyes of the world were upon him. The song being ended, there was a great deal of applause, in which the gentry joined with animation, talking and smiling among themselves, and then, from the general body of the audience came one bold voice, which cried "Ong-kore," for which the village butcher was responsible. The poet bowed, and then blushed violently, the bold cry was taken up by one and another, faintly at first, but presently—seeing that the gentry were nodding their heads and clapping their hands—with more vigor. The organist raised his bow, there was instant silence, and after whispered instructions from the schoolmistress to the children, the song was sung again, and finished amidst uproarious demonstrations of approval. One of the children who sang the solo part was called up to the gentry, and a young lady presented her with a book. Who this young lady was was made clear to me by the local butcher calling out, "Three cheers for Miss Haldane," which were lustily and heartily given without regard to the number. The village people waved hats and handkerchiefs, and would have cried themselves hoarse had not the fugleman, exhausted with his efforts, come to a sudden stop, whereat they followed suit. Partially recovering, the butcher demanded three cheers for Mr. Haldane, which also were given, with less heartiness, but still with sufficient enthusiasm to satisfy any reasonable being. Whether Mr. Haldane was satisfied I cannot say; he did not appear to me to take much notice, keeping himself in the background, and not coming forward to acknowledge the compliment; but that he was not unobservant of those in front of him I presently had proof. His daughter, who wore a dress of pure white, behaved very differently. She blushed prettily, and nodded with much sweetness, and turned to her father with smiles saying something to him, which, of course, at the distance I was from her, I could not hear; but he shook his head

and waved his hand, as much much as to say, "No, the honor is yours: I have no share in it." This may have been just, but it was not gracious, I thought. I could not dwell upon it, however, for the reason that my attention was chiefly fixed upon Miss Haldane. The most beautiful season of the year is spring, as it is the most beautiful season of life, and surely a sweeter exemplification of this was never seen than in the person of Miss Haldane. Her face was the loveliest I had ever beheld, and there was a quality of goodness in it which attracted me, and completely won my heart; it seemed to influence all surrounding things, and to invest them with something of her own charm of sweetness and tenderness. When she dismissed the happy child who had sung the solo, she called up the organist, a grey-haired man, and said a few words to him which brought a light into his eyes, and then, in obedience to her command—for was she not truly queen of these pleasant hours?—the poet came forward to receive his meed of praise and thanks. He behaved very sheepishly, and scarcely dared to touch the hand she held out to him, but the trying and triumphant ordeal was soon over, and he retired to dream of future fame and glory. At this moment, a man, who had approached me without my observing him, touched my arm.

"You are a stranger here," he said.

"Yes," I answered; "I only arrived to-day."

"Mr. Haldane," said the man, "has sent me to inquire

who you are."

I took a card from my pocket, on which my name was printed, without my address, simply "Mr. Millington," and handing it to him, said that perhaps he would take it to Mr. Haldane. He looked at it, looked at me, and went away, and I saw him give the card to Mr. Haldane. Returning soon, the man said,

"Mr. Haldane would like to speak to you."

I followed him, and observed that Mr. Haldane was moving away from his companions, with the evident intention of speaking privately to me. Upon our coming together, the man who had conducted me stood a little apart.

"I saw you among the people," said Mr. Haldane, "and

knew you were a stranger."

"You have sharp eyes," I thought, but I said nothing to that effect, only that I had written to him that I was coming to Chudleigh Park in compliance with his request.

"I received your letter," he said, "but you did not informme you were coming to-day." He paused a moment.

"I cannot speak to you till to morrow."

"That will be convenient to me, sir," I said. "I see that

you have your hands full now."
"Yes," he replied, "and I am afraid we cannot give you a bed at the hall. We have a number of guests, and every room is occupied."

"I can obtain accommodation at the village," I re-

marked.

"No doubt," he said, and called to the man who had brought me to him. "Simpson, see that this gentleman has a room somewhere in the village to-night."

"Yes, sir," said Simpson.

I was surprised at his reference to me as "this gentleman," but I set it down to his not wishing to make my name known. One thing leads to another, you see, and when you wish to keep things dark you cannot be too careful. But he could not keep my name from Simpson, who had seen it on my card.

"That is all, I think," said Mr. Haldane. "I shall be

disengaged to-morrow at twelve."

"I will call upon you punctually, sir," I said.

He nodded and walked away, but he had not gone a dozen yards, before he turned and beckoned to me. I went to him, Simpson stopping discreetly at a distance.

"You need not say anything," he said, "about my send-

ing for you."

"No one shall know, sir," I said.

He nodded again, and walked off, this time for good.

#### CHAPTER III.

SIMPSON did not join me immediately. He waited till Mr. Haldane was out of sight, and then he sauntered towards me with a careless, unconcerned air, as though the idea of introducing himself had just occurred to him. There is something in the manner and bearing of certain classes of men which at once betrays their calling. For instance, a jockey. Seeing one even for the first time, who could mistake him? You look at his face, and you wonder how he feels off a horse. He is like a sailor walking along macadamised roads after a long voyage. A butcher, too. It is impossible for him to disguise himself. In private life he is generally respectably dressed; his clothes are remarkably new, and his boots and hats have a wonderful polish on them; but you cast just one glance at him, and you see the inner man, in flannel apron, knife in hand, with a "buy, buy," expression on his features. The same with valets and body-servants. The nicely smoothed hair, the half-sliding, half-confident motion of their bodies, the cut of their clothes, when they wear their own, the quietly observant eye, unmistakably proclaim their calling. It was Simpson's, as I correctly judged; he was Mr. Haldane's valet, and it was not long before he volunteered the information, which was thrown out as a feeler, and as an invitation to a like confidence on my part. But I was on my guard; my plan was to ask questions, and to answer as few as possible. So I fenced and parried, and Simpson made no demur. This gave me a high opinion of his abilities, for I felt that he was the sort of a man who never neglected an opportunity of worming himself into other people's secrets; that he should express no disappointment at my curt answers proved him to be something better than a novice.

All this time you may be sure I had not forgotten Rachel Diprose, but I had seen no one answering to the description my son George had given of her, or resembling the portrait

he had in his possession; and it occurred to me that Simpson was the man to enlighten me as to what kind of girl she was. I was not the first to mention her name, but I led the way to his introducing it into the conversation. Upon my prompting he furnished me with an account of the domestics in Mr. Haldane's establishment, from the housekeeper and butler downwards; he told me their several names, and I noticed, when he mentioned Rachel Diprose, that there was just that difference in his tone which denoted that she was a person who held a special place in his mind. It is by these apparently trifling indications that men who call themselves thought-readers are assisted in arriving at successful conclusions. The change in Simpson's voice when the name of Rachel Diprose passed his lips set me thinking a bit, of course in the interests of my son, and I began to speculate whether Simpson was a married man.

"The housekeeper and butler are married, I think you said?"

This was the first remark I made towards ascertaining Simpson's own state in life.

"Yes," he answered.

"That must make it comfortable for them," I observed. "Good situations, everything provided for them, no butchers' bills to pay, and putting by a pound now and then for a rainy day."

"They've nothing to complain of," said Simpson.
"Some gentlemen," I said, "object to keeping married people in their employ, but Mr. Haldane is more liberalminded."

"That doesn't prove liberal-mindedness."

"Perhaps not; I'm speaking in a general way. Now, you"—and I cocked my eye knowingly and reflectively at him-"I should take you to be a married man, with a charming wife and family."

"There you're wrong. I'm a single man."

"All the more agreeable for you," I said, shifting my ground. "There you are, a bachelor, with a lot of nice girls about him that he can pick and choose from. You must be

in clover. There's pretty Rachel Diprose, now, a favorite with her young mistress, and I'll wager with a bit of money put by."

He looked at me, seemed suddenly to remember something, and instantly shut up. Which caused me presently

to drift, quite naturally, into other subjects.

We had walked out of the park and into the village while we were conversing, and Simpson stopped before a publichouse called "The Brindled Cow."

"You can a get bed here," he said. "I'll come in with

you and make it all right with the landlord."

"And perhaps," I said, "you won't mind taking a drink with me. I feel a little strange, being in a strange part of the country, and shall be glad of company. If ever you come to London we might spend an evening together."

I wanted to dispel any bad impression I might have produced upon him, but if I had thought twice I should not have thrown out the hint. He took it up quickly.

"I'll drink with you with pleasure," he said; "and I'll spend an evening with you in London when I've got one to

spare. What's your address?"

I was fairly beaten, I own, and, without giving him offence, could not refuse to tell him where I lived. So at his request I wrote the address in a pocket-book he produced. Then we went into the "public."

The arrangement for a bed was soon made, Simpson saying a few words apart to the landlord; after which I inquired what particular tipple my new friend preferred,

and asked the landlord to join us.

"Spirits just before going to bed," said Simpson, "beer in the morning, and port wine in the evening. That's my system. The landlord has a good bottle of port wine in his cellar."

It being evening now, I called for the bottle of good port wine, in accordance with Simpson's system, and then, at his suggestion, we adjourned to a small room in which there was a bagatelle table, and began to drink and smoke and play. I could have beaten him easily, but to gain his favor completely I allowed him to beat me, and as he

pocketed the twopences for which we played I saw that losing was a winning game for me. I drove another nail in by remarking that I had had no dinner, and asking would he join me. Certainly he would, he replied; it was all hurry-scurry up at the Hall; and if I wanted to know what duck and green peas were like, the landlord of "The Brindled Cow" would show me.

"When he puts his mind to it," said Simpson, "he can

serve up a dinner fit for any gentleman in the land."

So the dinner was ordered, and we continued to play

bagatelle till it was ready.

"You're a man after my own heart," said Simpson, as he polished off the choicest slices of the duck, and ladled down the green peas, which really were delicious. "I didn't take to you at first, but it shows how a man may be mistaken. What's all that row about outside?"

The landlord, who had entered to attend to our wants, replied that Miss Haldane had come from the park to the village, to see how the people were enjoying themselves; but the sounds we heard were the reverse of festive. A woman's shrill voice and excited murmurs reached our ears. Simpson went to the window, and exclaimed—

"By the Lord! It's that girl Honoria come back!

There's mischief brewing."

And out he went, leaving, to my surprise, some dainty morsels on his plate. I hastened after him into the narrow street, and, keeping close to him, pushed my way through a number of people gathered round two women, whom they hemmed in. One was a woman of middle age, and it was her shrill voice I had heard. She was standing over the form of another female, poorly dressed, whose crouching attitude prevented me from seeing her features.

"Here she is, the slut!" cried the angry woman.

"Here she is, come back with her shame and her brazen face! She commenced young enough, didn't she? But young as she is, she's old enough for sin. Have you brought a baby with you, you huzzy, or have you droppe it in the water? Where are my earrings and brooch yo stole before you ran away, you thief, you? Isn't there a

policeman here to take the drab into custody? I'll drag her to prison with my own hands if no one 'll help me!"

Thus she went on, screaming at the top of her voice, and had it not been for me would have laid violent hands upon the frightened creature she was reviling and accusing. She paused to recover her breath, and as she did so some person said—

"Hush! Miss Haldane is coming."

There was a sudden stillness, and the ranks opened for the young lady to pass through. She came close to the accuser and the accused, and, stooping, placed her hand upon the shoulder of the crouching figure. At this touch the woman raised her head, and seeing who was by her side, clutched Miss Haldane's dress convulsively, as if for protection from the enemies who surrounded her. The upraised face was wild, and full of anguish and terror, but it was scarcely less beautiful than that of her saviour.

"Oh, Honoria, Honoria!" murmured Miss Haldane, and she knelt and drew the face of the unfortunate girl to her

breast.

There was a heavenly pity in her eyes; a world of tenderness in her voice. An angel from Heaven, indeed, was this sweet girl.

#### CHAPTER IV.

A FEW minutes later I was standing by the window of the room in which Simpson and I had but partly dined. I was waiting for my guest, who had promised to return in the course of half an hour to finish his dinner, and so that there should be no reproach upon my hospitality I had put the sweets and cheese and the watercress back until Simpson's arrival. There was no person in the room but myself, and I could have been more sociably employed had I descended to the bar of "The Brindled Cow" and mixed with my fellow man. But there were drawbacks to this course. My fellow man, as he was now represented in the bar of

the inn, was distinctly noisy and unruly, having drank more than was good for him, and I objected to his company on that condition. Therefore I was consulting my inclination in avoiding him, and I was lonely from choice.

What had occurred with respect to the incident referred

to at the end of the last chapter was this:

When Miss Haldane drew the face of Honoria to her breast shielding her, as it were, from the fury of the woman who was accusing her, she looked up at the people who surrounded them. Not one in the crowd spoke a word, and the only sounds that were heard proceeded from the sobbing girl who lay in the arms of her protector. Presently Miss Haldane, whispering something in Honoria's ear, rose, holding Honoria's hand, who rose with her. The expression on Miss Haldane's face as she looked around, was one of reproach and pity. Honoria's head was sunk low upon her bosom, and she did not once lift it. Miss Haldane's silent appeal to the villagers caused them to fall apart, and a free passage was opened for the two girls, who passed through it slowly and in silence. They walked through the narrow street in the direction of the park, and in a few moments were out of sight. Only one person followed them, walking some distance behind. This person was Simpson. He had warranty for his action, being a servant in the Haldane family, and to a certain extent, as I felt, in their confidence. I had no warranty to follow his example; as a stranger, my intrusion would have been naturally resented. Nevertheless I was more than curious to learn the story which I knew was attached to the singular and exciting incident.

It was an hour before Simpson rejoined me, and he came into the room briskly. There was satisfaction in his eyes

as he observed that the cloth was still on the table.

"That's all over," he said, "and now I suppose we can finish our dinner."

"Yes," I said. "I ordered them to keep the sweets hot, but the duck must be cold by this time."

"Cold duck is delicious," said the voracious Simpson.

"Let's have it up."

What remained of the duck was put upon the table, and

Simpson was mainly instrumental in polishing it off. Then we had the sweets, then the cheese and watercress, and the bottle of port being finished, I called for another. It had the effect of making Simpson mellow—and communicative. So communicative, indeed, that he opened the subject himself.

"That was a curious scene," he remarked.

"It was," I said. "Miss Haldane has a kind heart."

"A lady may go too far, though," he observed. A grudging comment which led me to conclude that Simpson's nature was more practical than sentimental. "I can understand people with third class tickets trying to get into first-class carriages, but I am hanged if I can understand the other way of things."

"There certainly can be no doubt," I said, "that Miss Haldane is first class, and the girl with the strange name

third."

"It is a strange name," said Simpson; "all very well for a lady, but it's handicapping a common girl too heavily, likely to turn her head, you know. I wonder where she's been all this time."

"She belongs to the village," I hazarded.

"In a sort of fashion. She's lived here long enough."

"Her parents must be dreadfully cut up."

"She hasn't any."

- "They are spared the shame of the disgrace, then," I said.
  - "How?" asked Simpson.
    "Being dead," I replied.

"Didn't I tell you she had none?"

"O," I said, "but that makes her case more pitiable."

"I can't quite see that. I've my own ideas. A fine-looking girl, Millington," said Simpson, becoming suddenly familiar, which I set down to the wine.

"I just caught a glimpse of her." Half-a-dozen of the "Brindled Cow's" best cigars were brought in, at my

order. "Do you smoke?"

"Every gentleman smokes. Thank you. As I said, a fine-looking girl. A saucy face—and such eyes! A dif-

ferent kind of beauty from Miss Haldane's, but some prefer one sort, some another. I like 'em dapperer and trimmer, not so brunetty."

"Is there any truth in the accusation the woman

brought against her?"

"There is no saying. She might have taken the brooch and earrings, then again she mightn't. She was fond of finery, and that tells against her. There's no fear of her being put in prison; she's lucky in having a lady like Miss Haldane on her side. If it was her father, it would be another pair of shoes. He isn't soft-hearted, not a bit of it. He'd give her three months, and take a pleasure in it. Would you like to hear the story?"

"These stories are always interesting," I said; "doubly

so when they are told over a friendly glass."

"There's a mystery about her birth," said Simpson, who was in the humor to hear himself talk. "Seven miles from here lies the village of Bittern, a quarter the size of this. Seventeen or eighteen years ago a woman comes from somewhere, and takes a cottage that's to let there. Four shillings a week she pays for it; three rooms, bedroom, parlor, and kitchen. She brings with her a baby, this same Honoria. No one knows anything about the woman, and as a matter of course it is supposed that the child is her own. She doesn't say anything about it herself, but it's taken for granted. The woman pays her rent regularly, does no work, and lives a little better than her neighbors. How does she pay her way? Regular as clockwork she receives every Tuesday morning a postoffice order for eighteen shillings, which leaves fourteen her shillings a week to live on, after paying her rent. With only a baby to keep she can manage very well upon that. After a while it comes to be understood that Honoria is not her own child, and that she is taking care of her for somebody. It is nobody's business, and nobody has anything to say about it; and so the woman and child live in the cottage till Honoria is seven years old. Before she gets to that age something occurs; it is noticed that the eighteen shillings a week does not come as regularly as it used to. Sometimes it is two

or three days late, sometimes it doesn't come at all. How that gets to be known is through the baker, who keeps the postoffice, and who cashes the postoffice orders the woman receives. A year later, when Honoria is eight, something of more importance occurs. The woman disappears and Honoria is left to take care of herself. She is too young to do that, and so she becomes a waif and a stray, picking up a bit of grub here, and a bit of grub there, and sleeping anywhere and everywhere. When the woman disappears she is in arrears for rent, and her few bits of sticks are sold to settle arrears; then the cottage is let to somebody else, and Honoria is thrown pretty well stark naked on the world. There's no saying what would have become of her if it hadn't been for Miss Haldane, who was no older than Honoria at the time, but who, riding through Bittern, sees a little child sitting by a hedge, sobbing her heart out. Down my young lady insists upon getting, and she goes up to Honoria, just as she did outside an hour ago, and sits down by her side, and gives her some sweets, and winds up by bringing Honoria into the carriage, and riding back with her here to Chudleigh. If Miss Haldane had been riding with her father this wouldn't have happened, because he's not given to noticing poor people, but there was only the nurse in the carriage with my young lady, and so she had her way. Now I come into the story. Mr. Haldane sends for me, and says that his daughter has brought some wretched child into the village, and asks me to find out who she is. That is how I got the particulars I've just told you of. While I was gathering them Honoria is kept with the servants at the Hall, and Miss Haldane insists upon looking after her, and does all sorts of absurd things. If she had been allowed to have her own way entirely Honoria would have slept with her, but they put a stopper to that. Mr. Haldane, I think, saw Honoria once, but I am not sure about that, and it isn't of any consequence. I came back with my report, and Mr. Haldane said that Honoria couldn't keep at the Hall, and that I'd better find some woman in the village, who, for two or three shillings a week, would take

care of the child. That wasn't a difficult matter, and Honoria goes to live with Mrs. Porter, the woman who says she's been robbed of her brooch and earrings. Till Honoria is twelve years old the steward gives me the money every week to pay Mrs. Porter, but then Miss Haldane, who has more pocket money than she knows what to do with, takes the matter out of the steward's hands, and settles with Mrs. Porter herself. And a pretty penny Mrs. Porter makes out of her, if I'm not mistaken, for though Miss Haldane has a decided way of her own when she makes up her mind, she's not up to the dodges of such a woman as Mrs. Porter. Simple-looking as she is, she's only to be turned from her purpose by cunning or by a stronger will than her own."

Simpson pausing here to pour himself out another glass of port, I put in a word.

"Mr. Haldane has a stronger will than his daughter."

"No doubt of that," said Simpson, holding up his glass to the light; it was now dark, and we had been supplied with candles, there being no gas in the village. "He's master—O, yes, he's master."

"Why did he allow his daughter to take this delicate affair out of his hands, she being at the time only twelve

years of age?"

"He didn't trouble himself about it. I don't know that he ever inquired after Honoria, or ever stepped a yard out of his road to see her. He had humoured Miss Haldane's fancy, and there was an end of the matter as far as he was concerned. Then there's another thing to be taken into account, Millington."

"What is that other thing?"

"Human nature."

"I don't understand you."

"Don't you?" said Simpson, winking at me; the liquor he had imbibed at my expense was certainly sapping his discretion. "It won't hurt the steward if I speak my mind; he's dead, and left no family behind him. I'll tell you what human nature is, it's number one. I don't care how you look at it or what clothes you put on it, it's number one. Pick it to shreds, squeeze the superfluous stuff out of it, take all the humbug out of it, and what do you see? Number one. Consequently, when Miss Haldane, young as she was, goes to the steward and says that she's going to pay Mrs. Porter herself out of her private little purse, the steward answers, 'Very well, Miss,' and puts the three shillings a week into his pocket. That's my judgment, and I'll bet five to one I'm right. Any takers?"

"I'm not a betting man."
"I dare say not," said Simpson, with just a touch of maliciousness, "unless you get a certainty. Do you know, Millington, I think I'll indulge in forty winks."

"Finish about Honoria first. Would you like a whisky

and soda?" I rang the bell.

"You're a good sort. I'll finish Honoria, and then I'll take my nap. It'll freshen me up for what I've got to do at the Manor House to-night. There's a grand ball to be given there, and I don't intend to be out of it. Well, then, Honoria grows up, and Miss Haldane grows up, and I never saw a lady take such an interest in a poor girl before. gives her dresses and bits of finery, and she has her taught, and altogether makes as much of her as if they were equals. That's the way things went on till about this time last year. Yes, it's as near as possible twelve months ago that all the village rings with the news that Honoria's run away."

"With whom?"

"Nobody knows. The only sure thing is that she's gone; and Mrs. Porter goes about saying that the girl has robbed her. She makes out a list of the missing thingsthe brooch, the earrings, a shawl, a pair of boots, and some bits of old china."

"In the accusation she brought against Honoria this evening," I remarked, "she made no mention of the latter articles."

"No, because they were recovered. A tramp who'd been seen in the village was taken up a week afterwards, and everything but the brooch and earrings was tracked; he had stolen and sold them."

"It stands to reason that he stole the missing things as well."

"Mrs. Porter says no, and sticks to it that Honoria stole the jewellery. She never said so in Miss Haldane's presence, so that my young lady has heard of it for the first time."

"I, for one, don't believe the poor girl is a thief. If she were, she would never have shown her face here again. What construction, apart from the missing jewellery, was put upon her running away?"

Simpson's blinking eyes were fixed on my face.

construction would you put upon it?"

"Well, well," I said, "we are always ready to be uncharitable. But after all, the girl might have left the village to better herself."

"Honestly?" asked Simpson.

"Yes, honestly," I replied, feeling nettled with myself because of intruding doubts, and knowing that I was only championing Honoria for the sake of her one sincere and

sweet champion, Miss Haldane.

"You don't mean it, Millington, you don't mean it. Bring your common sense to bear; bring your knowledge of the world to bear. If she had gone away honestly she would have left the village in the light of day; she would have said good-bye to her friends. For she had friendsplenty of 'em; we all liked Honoria, more or less. But she goes away in the dead of night; she says good-bye to nobody; and the clerk at the railway station swears she didn't travel to wherever she went by rail. There's very little traffic at the railway station here, and no one in the village can go away by train without it's being known."

"How did Miss Haldane take her disappearance?"

"Never said a word to any of us about it. She was paler and more melancholy than she'd been, especially when she passed Mrs. Porter's door; and of course none of the villagers spoke to her about Honoria. It wouldn't have been fitting, with the thoughts they had of the girl, and the judgment they passed upon her."

"Miss Haldane might have heard from Honoria."

"She might; but if she did she kept it to herself.

The mystery to me is, why she ever came back. If she'd had a mother or a father I might have understood it, but being a waif and a stray, with no real claim upon anybody, there's no understanding of it. Are you fond of puzzles, Millington?"

"I used to be."

"I never was, and always looked upon people as fools who wasted their time over 'em. Whenever I was asked to do one I gave it up instanter, unless there was something hanging to it."

"Something to your own advantage."

"Exactly! Human nature again. Honoria's return is a puzzle. I give it up. And now, if you've no objection, I'll take my forty winks."

He lay back in his chair and closed his eyes, with a snug expression of satisfaction on his face. Without a doubt Simpson was a gentleman on very good terms with himself. I contemplated him a moment or two in silence. What he had imparted to me had increased instead of allaying my curiosity.

"Simpson," I said, rather sharply.

"Hallo!" he cried, with a start, opening his eyes lazily.

"Just one question or two before you go off."

"About that girl Honoria?"

"Yes, about Honoria."

"Bother Honoria," he said, and closed his eyes again.
"Come," I said, in a coaxing tone, "like a good fellow now. It won't take you a minute."

"I'm not going to open my eyes again, I tell you that, Millington. Well, what is it?"

"Did she have any sweethearts in the village?"

"All the young men in the place were sweet on her," he answered, drowsily. "Eyes like sloes, hair down to the waist, cherry lips—" He smacked his own.

"Any regular sweethearts, I mean?"

"Not one that she encouraged out and out. Let me go

to sleep."

But I was determined he should not till he had answered me. I shook him smartly.

"Too bad, Millington; too bad," he murmured.
"Where's your consideration?"

"When she disappeared from the village did any one

else disappear at the same time?"

"Not a living soul, man or woman."

"Did she go to London?"
"Not knowing, can't say."

These four words dropped slowly from his lips, and were followed by a snore. Simpson was off. There was no getting another word out of him.

## CHAPTER V.

THERE was nothing inviting in the prospect of sitting in the room with my sleeping guest. I had not fallen in love with him while he was awake, and there was less cause for sudden affection now that he was in an unconscious state. He had a disagreeable habit of snoring and choking as he slumbered, and his mouth was wide open. Blowing out the candles to prevent a possible accident I left the room. The village was still in excitement, not occasioned by Honoria's return, which was probably put aside as a tit bit for quieter hours, but by the celebration of the holiday in honor of Miss Haldane. Upon some of the inhabitants the celebration had produced the effect of staggering gait and thick utterance of speech, but these delinquents, all of whom were of the male sex, were being carefully looked after by the womankind, and what disorder was apparent was of a good-humored kind, and not likely to degenerate into anything worse. "The Brindled Cow" was doing a rattling business, which the landlord was attending to with tact and conscientiousness, persuading those who had had a little more than enough to heed the advice of their wives, and go home like good sensible souls, for the sake of themselves and the quality of the Manor House, of whom it was evident they stood in wholesome dread. As I moved among these scenes I could not help reflecting upon the

small difference that existed—if indeed there were any difference at all—between life in an obscure village like this and life in the great Babylon from which I had journeyed in the morning. There is supposed to be a world of meaning in the saying that God made the country and man made the town, and many accept it in the light that the country is pure and the town vile. It is, however, only a question of degree or numbers. In town and country human nature is the same, as weak in the fire of temptation, as strong in the cause of innocence and virtue. What I had witnessed during the last few hours was pregnant proof of this. I thought of Honoria; of the accusation which had been brought against her, and which I felt was false; of the shame to which she had been brought, and which I felt was true; I thought of her champion, in whose sweet face shone purity and charity; I thought of the grand ball that was to be given presently at the Manor House; of the joy and gladness that would prevail; and as I dwelt upon the gay scene I saw a despairing girl, to whom the world was a prison filled with threatening shadows. Virtue and vice, light and darkness, side by side.

A hand was laid upon my arm. I looked down, and saw a comely young woman, who looked up at me demurely.

"You were pointed out to me, sir," she said, "as Mr. Millington. It was the landlord of the 'Brindled Cow' who told me; though I should have known you anywhere."

Pleasant eyes, pleasant features, and a pleasant voice.

"And I should have known you," I said, holding out my hand in a fatherly way, "wherever I met you. How would you have recognised me?"

"By your likeness to George. How would you have

recognised me, sir?"

'By your likeness to the portrait George is never tired of gazing at, my dear."

"I am glad to hear that, sir," said Rachel Diprose.

"And I am glad to hear I am like my lad."

"How is George, sir?"

"He is well, and told me to give you his love. I have been wondering when I should see you."

She moved a little into the light so that I could see her quite clearly. It was modestly done, and I was pleased at the action. I had had my doubts of Rachel; they grew weak as I gazed upon her pretty face.

"Have you come expressly from the Hall to see me?"

I asked.

"Yes, sir."

"But how did you know I was here?"

"Through Mr. Simpson, sir."

"Oh, through Mr. Simpson," said I, waiting for an explanation.

"Miss Haldane sent me for you, sir. She wants you to

do her a service, and I said I was sure you would."

"Of course I will, my dear, but still I am puzzled a bit how this has come about. Throw a light on it, Rachel."

"It was in this way, sir. But we had better walk to the Hall; we can talk more comfortably away from the crowd." She took my arm, and we proceeded in the direction of the park. "It was in this way, sir. Something occurred in the village that has made Miss Haldane very sad. I think you were there at the time."

I guessed that she referred to Honoria, and I said,

"Yes, I was there." She continued:

"Miss Haldane saw you among the people, and knew you were a stranger. She spoke to me about you, and wondered who you were. I said I would try and find out, and I went to Mr. Simpson, who was at the Hall after what occurred in the village, and asked him. You may imagine how surprised I was when he told me your name was Millington, and that you had come to see Mr. Haldane upon business."

"He told you that, did he? What made you go to Mr. Simpson for information, Rachel?"

"He knows everything that is going on, and is always curious about strangers. 'Are you quite, quite positive, Mr. Simpson?' I said. He said he was, and he gave me a discription of you. Do you know, sir, when he said it was Mr. Millington, I thought at first it was George."

"Very natural, my dear."

"But his description of you as a middle-aged gentleman didn't fit George. Then I thought that there must be more than one Millington in England, and that you mightn't be any relation of George's. I told Miss Haldane what Simpson said, and she asked if you could be trusted. I answered if you were George's father—it was only then that the thought came into my head that you might be-that I would trust you with my life, but that if you weren't I hadn't any opinion to offer." As Rachel's hand was lying on my sleeve I put my disengaged hand upon it and patted it approvingly; the conviction was dawning upon me that George had made a good choice. "'Go and see, Rachel,' Miss Haldane said, 'and if he is George's father'"—

"O," said I, interrupting her, "Does she know about

you and George, then?",

"Yes, sir. I haven't any secrets from my dear young lady, and I don't think she has many from me. 'If he is George's father,' she said, 'ask him if he will come and speak to me."

"To do her a service?" I said.

"Yes," said Rachel, "to do her a service."

As she did not volunteer any information as to the nature of the service for which I was required, I forebore to press her, and inwardly commended her for her prudence. Neither did she make any inquires of me as to the business which had brought me to Chudleigh Park, and this was in my eyes another recommendation. Having got thus far we fell into conversation about George, and you may be sure that was a subject I could be most eloquent upon. I said nothing that was not a pleasure for her to hear, and she fully repaid me by saying that George spoke of me exactly as I spoke of George.

"What would give my lad great joy," I said, "would be if you were nearer to each other. Sweethearting at a distance is not half as agreeable as when young people are

together."

"But it can't be helped," said Rachel.
"I suppose it can't," said I, with a kind of doubt in my voice.

"George knows that I have made up my mind not to leave my young lady till she is settled. I couldn't do it, Mr. Millington.

"Yes, he has told me so. Well, my dear, the sooner Miss Haldane is settled the better for all parties. Is there

any early prospect of that, Rachel?"

"I can't say," she replied. "There are some things I mustn't speak about."

"Quite right, my dear. Never betray a confidence. I shall make George happy by telling him how pleased I am with you."

We were now at the Hall, and Rachel asked me to wait while she went and told her young mistress that I was

come.

"You mustn't mind if you are detained a little while," she said, and left me to myself for a quarter of a hour or so, at the end of which time she made her appearance again, and made me follow her to Miss Haldane's room.

Miss Haldane was at dinner, Rachel whispered to me as we went upstairs, and she was presently to dress for the ball. All around me were evidences of state and grandeur, which none but a gentleman of great fortune could maintain. The servants were in handsome livery, and the passages and staircases were bright with lights and flowers. No one took any notice of me, every person I saw being intent on business or pleasure. I was glad when we did not meet Mr. Haldane. In acceding to Miss Haldane's request I had not given him a thought, and it was only when I was in his house that it occurred to me that a meeting with him might be awkward. I was doing no wrong, however, and I quickly made up my mind, in case of a meeting, to answer frankly any questions he might put to me. There was no need of any explanation, as I did not see him.

Rachel took me into a room adjoining one in which, I judged, Miss Haldane was to dress. She went into this adjoining room, and presently Miss Haldane came from it, and greeted me gracefully; but I saw there was trouble in her face.

"Rachel," said Miss Haldane, "I wish to speak to Mr. Millington alone. Remain in the other room in case I want you." When Rachel was gone she continued: "It is fortunate you are here, Mr. Millington, as I should not know whom else to trust. Everyone is so busy, and there are some who are apt to judge harshly. They are sorry for it afterwards, but it is not always easy to undo an unkindness." She paused, as if she found it difficult to speak of what was weighing on her mind. With abrupt decision, which denoted a certain strength of character, she said, "It is of the poor girl you saw in the village?"

"Honoria," I said.

"Yes, Honoria," she said, and paused again.

"You may speak freely to me, Miss Haldane," I said. "I will do whatever you desire, and you may trust me to

act kindly."

"Thank you, Mr. Millington," she said; "your assurance is a great relief to me. You are acquainted with the poor girl's name. Has anyone been speaking to you about her?"

"Some particulars of her residence in the village have

reached me, and I am sorry for her."

She gave me a grateful look. "You must not believe all you hear, Mr. Millington. Honoria is a good girl, and was not satisfied with her position. I have suspected that a long time, and when she went away, having no family here that had any claims upon her, it was with the intention to better herself. There was nothing wrong in that."

"Nothing, Miss Haldane."

"What Mrs. Porter accused her of is not true. It was unfortunate that she was robbed just at the time Honoria left the village, but Honoria is not to be blamed for it. I see now that she could not have been happy with Mrs. Porter, and that must have been one reason for her sudden departure. I was very fond of her, and she had an affection for me. Mr. Millington, do you think you can find her for me?"

"But she was with you two or three hours ago."

"I know. I brought her to the Hall, and asked the

servants to be good to her, and to let me see her to-morrow when this busy time is over. I was greatly distressed when Rachel told me she had left the house."

"Do you know why she left?" I asked.

"No; nor does Rachel. But she has gone, and I am afraid to think what will become of her. She is quite penniless, Mr. Millington; she did not tell me so, but I am sure of it. I did not like to offer her money, for fear of hurting her feelings; I thought I would wait till to-morrow, and then, after hearing her story, I would decide how I could best assist her. Poor Honoria! She hasn't a friend, Mr. Millington."

"She has one very sincere friend, Miss Haldane."

"Indeed I would like to be; but how can I when I don't know where she is?"

"May I make a remark, Miss Haldane?"

"I wish you would. I am sure it would be in the

right direction."

"Before I can advise you, before I know how to proceed, I should like to ascertain the cause of her leaving the Hall. If you can spare Rachel, and will receive me again in a few minutes, I could see my way more clearly."

"Certainly, Mr. Millington." She called Rachel. "Rachel, go with Mr. Millington, and tell him what he wants to know.

Bring him back to me when he is ready to come."

"Yes, Miss," said Rachel, and she and I left the room, and went togther to the lower part of the house. Rachel could tell me very little, but she could act under my directions. I had something more than a suspicion of the reason of Honoria's hasty departure. Being given into the care of the servants she had met with just such treatment as might have been expected by any person who was a better judge of human nature than Miss Haldane. Black looks had been directed towards her, harsh words had been flung at her, she had been condemned without a trial. It is the way of people in humble circumstances, who are generally far more cruel in their judgment of their equals than those in a higher position. Stung to the soul the unhappy girl had fled, to hide herself—Where?

I did not make the inquiries myself, but, through Rachel, I learned all that I wanted to know. With a due regard to the fact that Rachel was a young and virtuous girl, I was extremely careful in the instructions I gave her, and what she gathered from her fellow-servants was of far less weight in her eyes than in mine. Reading between the lines, and reasoning out the bare particulars with which she supplied me, the suspicion I had formed became a certainty; and thus armed I returned to Miss Haldane, accompanied by Rachel, who, as before, retired to the inner room, and left her mistress and me to converse in private.

"Honoria will not come back to the Hall, Miss Hal-

dane."

"Oh, Mr. Millington!"

"You spoke truly when you said that some people are apt to judge harshly. I am afraid that is the case with the servants here."

"But they have not heard what Honoria has to say!"

"If they did," I said, with gentle firmness, "it is not unlikely she would be disbelieved." I did not add that it would harden them even more against her; it was the last of my wishes to give pain to the tender-hearted lady.

With the same abrupt decision I had already noticed

in her manner Miss Haldane said,

"Mr. Millington, Honoria must be found."

"I will endeavor to find her."

"Poor Honoria—poor Honoria! Think of the terrible night before her! Every house shut against her! Everyone she meets turning from her! Oh, Mr. Millington, if I had been a poor girl it might have happened to me!"

"Never," I thought, but I held my tongue.

She took a purse from her pocket, and emptied it into my hands. There were six sovereigns and a few pieces of silver.

"I shall never be able to repay you," she said, "if you will find Honoria, and give her this, with my love and pity. You are a father, and will be tender to her. See that she has shelter to-night, and counsel her what to do to-morrow. If she will not come to me, ask her if I may come to her;

and if she will not, beg her to write to me, and say that I will always, always be her friend."

She entrusted me with many more sweet messages of a similar nature, and I promised to do my best to carry out

her wishes.

"There is something else, Mr. Millington. Go to Mrs. Porter in the morning, and ascertain what value she places upon the brooch and earrings which the tramp stole from her with the other things. Pay her whatever she asks, and I will give you the money. I will not have Honoria's name coupled with any accusation of that kind, though I know the charge is false."

"I will do everything," I said, "in the way you wish it

done.

"I am truly beholden to you," she said, shaking hands with me.

And so I bade her good night, and went to find Honoria.

## CHAPTER VI.

I PROCEEDED in the direction of the village, not because I expected to find Honoria there, but it was likely I should be able to extract information from some one who saw her after she left the Hall. It was necessary that I should be careful in my inquiries, for the sake of the poor girl, and to ensure success in the task upon which I was engaged; neither did I wish it to reach the ears of Mr. Haldane that I was meddling in village affairs. But I learned nothing. Not one of the persons to whom I spoke had seen anything of Honoria, and I found myself at a standstill. In a discontented mood I retraced my steps to the park, and wandered through the dark spaces, carefully scrutinizing any likely spot in which Honoria might have sought refuge for the night. I met with no success, however, and was debating where to proceed when I thought of Chudleigh Woods. For a stranger like myself to go there and search for a girl whose long residence in Chudleigh must

have made its intricacies familiar to her was a forlorn hope, but it was the only hope that remained, and I turned my face to the rustic bridge which spanned the lake of lilies, Having crossed this bridge I paused to decide which direction to take, to the right or to the left. Either way I was confronted with a tangle of trees which seemed to mock my efforts. Idly standing for a few moments on the edge of the lake I pushed the stout walking stick I always carried with me into the water, to sound its depths. I could not touch the bottom, and I shuddered as I reflected that it was deep enough to end the woes of any rash and despairing mortal. One plunge upon such a night as this, and the wretched life was over. Did the quiet surface upon which I gazed hide a tragedy so awful? Common enough in human records was such an ending of folly and

sinful temptation.

Before I had determined on my course my attention was attracted by a red glow in mid air at the other end of the bridge. A man was there, walking towards me, and the glow came from a cigar he was smoking. As he approached me I observed that he was in evening dress, but the night was too dark for me to see his face clearly. By his springy steps I judged him to be young, and there was a noticeable freedom, not to say insolence in his movements which impressed me strongly. His appearance in evening dress, in a spot so secluded, aroused my curiosity. He was a gentleman—I am setting down the conclusions I formed as he traversed the bridge—and came from the Hall. Certainly for no idle purpose; there were pleasanter places in the park in which he could have smoked without interruption. Why, then, had he chosen these lonely woods in which to puff his cigar? I know the flavor of a good cigar, and his was an exceptionally fine one, which only a gentleman could afford to smoke. It was perhaps because I was in search of a clue that I associated this gentleman with Honoria. I was ready to catch at any straw that presented itself, and I caught at this, and determined to watch his proceedings. Whether I was right or wrong it could do no harm.

I kept myself well in shadow, and when, having crossed the bridge he turned, without hesitation, to the left I followed him so quietly that I was safe from detection. It is generally easy to tell whether a man is walking aimlessly or with a distant goal in view; the manner of the gentleman I was following indicated the latter, and the result proved it to be so. We had gone about five hundred yards, when he paused before a rough bench which had been set up in the forest. Upon this bench sat a woman, who raised her head at his approach. Otherwise she did not move or speak till he addressed her. The woman was Honoria.

They gazed at each other in silence a while; a frightened, piteous expression on her face—a scornful, pitiless expression on his.

"Well," he said, "you are here."

"Yes."

"Been waiting long?"

"Yes."

"Ah! Now perhaps you will tell me what the devil brought you back to the village?"

"You know!"

"I don't know. Come, out with it! You will do your-self no good by prevaricating."

"I wanted to see you."

"In the name of all that's wonderful, what for?"

"You know."

"I don't know."

"You do." In maintaining her point she exhibited no defiance. It was a simple and helpless iteration of the truth.

"All right; I do know. Good night."

"Austin!"

"Well?"

But Honoria, whether from weakness of character or sheer despair, did not answer him. She was thoroughly cowed and beaten down, and all she could do was to silently clasp her hands and with mournful eyes appeal to him for mercy. He had turned to leave her, but he thought better of it, and now once more he confronted her.

"How did you ascertain I was here?"

"I guessed you would be. Last year, before I——" She paused.

"Go on. Before you——"

"Went away, there was a talk of a celebration of this birthday. I came upon a chance."

"A devilish unlucky chance. You had better have

remained where you were."

"I could not."

" Why?"

"I was turned out of my lodgings. I had no money to pay the rent."

"A likely story. How did you get here?"

"I walked."

"All the way?"
All the way."

"You must have enjoyed yourself."

He was so utterly heartless that I could have struck him; but to carry out Miss Haldane's merciful intention it was imperative I should keep myself from the observation

of this gentleman.

"Give me your attention,' he said presently. "You ought to know me pretty well by this time, and if you think you can turn me from any purpose I have formed you will find out your mistake. I told you in London that I was tired of you, and intended to have nothing more to do with you. You don't dispute that, I suppose."

"I don't dispute it. You told me; but what am I to

do?"

"I don't care what you do. The world is before you."

"Austin," she said, with some poor show of spirit, "when you took me from the village——"

"Be careful in what you say. It was your own choice."

"God help me, it was! But I believed in your

promises."

"More fool you! I should have been as great a fool as yourself if I had believed in your protestations. We were both playing our own game. You wanted to go to London. I took you there, and a pretty penny you cost me.

"You promised to marry me.

"O, yes, the usual cry!"

"You promised solemnly, and I believed you. How

should I have guessed you were deceiving me?"

"Don't ask me conundrums. I made no promise to you that I have not fulfilled. As for marrying, you must be mad. You have no claim upon me, and I will take precious good care that you do not annoy me. There's the law, my lady; if you don't mind you will get into its clutches."

"What have I done to deserve it?"

"What have you done? Why the whole village is ringing with it. If I had suspected you were a thief—"

"Austin," she cried, interrupting him, "you don't, you

can't believe it!"

"I do believe it, and so does every one. Let us put this thing straight, my girl; I should like you to understand it clearly, so that you may not get yourself into trouble. You ran away from the village—don't interrupt me again, please. You are not the only young woman who has run away from a village, and you won't be the last. On the night you disappeared the woman you were living with was robbed of some articles of jewellery. You are liable at any moment to be taken up on that charge and clapped into prison. I don't want to move in the matter unless you force me to it."

"All you want," said Honoria, mournfully, "is to get rid

of me."

"Exactly. The little comedy in which you and I played the principal parts is finished. It wasn't by any means an original comedy; the world knows it by heart. The curtain fell and I bade you good-bye, and left you twenty pounds to start afresh with. If you didn't make good use of the money, that is your business, not mine, and I don't intend to make it mine. I'm not a sponge."

"I made the money last as well as I could; and you

know, Austin, I wrote to you more than once."

"Did you?" But although this exclamation implied denial I saw that he had received the letters.

"I did, and asked you what I, was to do, but you never

replied. Austin, don't drive me to despair. You don't know what is before me—something that makes me tremble to think of. It would be better for me to be dead than to live through what is coming unless you keep the promise you made me."

"Is that all you have to say?" he asked, flicking the ash

off his cigar.

"What more can I say, Austin?"

"I can't suggest. You have already said too much."
"There is one thing I could do if you abandon me."

"What is it?"
"Expose you."

He laughed. "Who would believe you? Who would take the word of a thief and a wanton against that of a gentleman? There have been plenty of these trumped-up charges; look them up, and see who has come off best. You would but expose your own shame, my lady. Now, just look here. Dare to threaten me again, and I'll set the police on you. Be reasonable, and I'll help you on a bit, as I would help a stranger. Here's a sovereign; you can get back to London with it: and then, never let me hear of you

again. You can't say now that I'm hard on you."
He held out the sovereign to her, but she did not take

it.

"Is that all you will do?" she asked. "Oh!" he said, "do you want more?"

"It is not money I mean."

"I can't think of anything else. Will you be sensible, and take a couple of sovereigns?"

" No."

"Then I have nothing more to say. Good night."

He turned on his heel, and walked leisurely away, giving her time to call him back. But she spoke no word, and

presently he was out of sight and hearing.

My whole attention was now centered upon Honoria. I felt that if I now suddenly presented myself I should frustrate the object I had in view. Honoria would know that I had been eavesdropping, and that the true story of her shame was no longer a secret. The chances were, in

her state of mind, that she would repulse me and fly from me; and even if I succeeded in detaining her she would look upon me with suspicion, and regard me as an enemy instead as a friend. My purpose was to win her confidence, and this would scarcely be possible if I showed that I was fully acquainted with her sad position. Therefore, I determined to wait patiently until she removed from the spot, and afforded me a more favorable opportunity of introduc-

ing myself.

For quite a quarter of an hour she did not move from her seat. I was prepared for an exhibition of grief and despair, but not a sound escaped her. She sat perfectly still, with her hands clasped before her, her manner that of one whose mind was a blank. Some light sound from bird or animal aroused her. With a frightened look, her nerves being in the condition to construe threateningly any indication of life that reached her senses, she rose to her feet, and, as though she had been ordered from the spot by a voice of authority, moved away. In which direction? That of the rustic bridge which spanned the lake. led to the park? From the park there was a road to the railway station, from which a train for London would leave at twelve o'clock. I looked at my watch; it was a quarter to eleven. There was plenty of time for Honoria to get to the station in time to catch this last train. Perhaps that was her intention, her errand to Chudleigh having failed. Then I thought that Miss Haldane had told me Honoria was penniless, but, after all, that might not be the case. Doubtless she had money enough to take her to London, and if she had not, I could supply here with more than was needful. I pitied the girl sincerely, and heartily despised her betrayer, but I had not made up my mind as to her character. I followed her noiselessly to the lake, determined to wait till she was near the station before I accosted her.

At the lake she paused in thought for so long a time that I began to get anxious. Once she turned her head hurriedly in my direction, and it was only by a rapid and silent movement that I escaped being seen by her. Then

she walked slowly on to the bridge, and when she reached the centre, paused again and looked over into the lake. It was at this point that the water was deepest. There was now a light in the sky, and I saw distinctly every movement she made. Sitting down upon the floor of the wooden bridge she took from her pocket an envelope, and from that a sheet of notepaper, upon which she wrote some words. Replacing the sheet of paper in the envelope she returned it to her pocket, and then, with a sudden and quick motion she stood upright. The decision and rapidity of this movement inspired me with the fear that she was about to commit suicide. This indeed was her intention. Flinging up her arms she stood for a moment in suspense, with the light shining upon her, and before she could carry her desperate purpose into execution she was struggling in my arms.

## CHAPTER VII.

"LET me go, let me go!" she cried.

"In a moment," I said soothingly; "let us get off this

bridge first; it is unsafe."

Recognizing that she was powerless she allowed me to lead her across. After her first protest she said nothing more while I kept my hold on her. Beset by fears, surrounded by enemies, she must have put the worst construction upon my unexpected appearance. I did all I could by kind and assuring words to set her mind at ease with respect to me, and when we were at a safe distance from the lake I said.

"That rickety old bridge needs repairing. No wonder you felt dizzy as you were crossing it. I almost tumbled into the water myself. You are all right now, are you

not?"

Instead of answering my question she asked me another. "Where are you going to take me?"
"Nowhere," I replied with a smile, "except you wish

me to show you the way to any place Though, for the matter of that, I don't promise to be of much use, as I am a stranger in the village."

"Don't you know me? Have you never seen me

before?"

I answered without the least hesitation or compunction, "No, I don't know you, I have never seen you before." A sigh of relief escaped her. "But now I look at you," I continued, "I shouldn't wonder if you are the girl I'm searching for." Again the expression on her face was one of fear, as that of a person who was being hunted down. "Now, my dear—don't mind my calling you my dear; it's only in a fatherly way, and I want to be your friend if you'll let me—don't get wrong thoughts into your head. All I know about you supposing you to be the person I'm looking for, is what Miss Haldane has told me, and it isn't likely, is it, that she should say anything about you or anyone that wasn't kind and good?"

"Miss Haldane?"

"Yes, my dear, Miss Haldane, as sweet a young lady as ever drew breath. I happened to come down to-night upon a little matter of business, and Miss Haldane happening to see me, asked me to do her a service. It's the first time I've ever been in Chudleigh, and everybody and everything, except Miss Haldane, is new to me, and that perhaps is why she pressed me into her service. Of course I don't know it was her reason; I'm only making a guess at it. There's a grand ball at the Manor House to-night, you know, and I'm not one of the guests, not being a gentleman 'Mr. Millington'—that's my name, my dear—'Mr. Millington,' Miss Haldane says to me, 'there's a young friend of mine to whom I am afraid the servants in Hall have behaved unkindly. She is very sensitive, and has gone away, when I wanted her to remain. I wish you would go and find her, and do what you can to help her, and give her my love."

"She said that?"

"She said that, my dear. 'And give her my love, and say that I am her friend, and shall always be her friend.

She hasn't many, poor girl.' Then, my dear, she gave me a description of you. And told me your name was Honoria. Is it?"

"You are not deceiving me?"

"Look me in the face, my dear, and say whether it's likely I would deceive a girl who might be my daughter, being a father myself, and be base and mean enough to invent a story to lead her astray?"

"No," said Honoria, casting a timid glance at me, "you it look like one of that sort."

don't look like one of that sort.

"I'm not one of that sort. If I were it isn't likely a sweet lady like Miss Haldane would put such trust in me. Then she says to me, 'Perhaps Honoria is in want of money,' and she empties her purse into my hand. 'Give her this, and ask her, if she will not come to me, to let me come to her, and beg her, with my love, to write to me." I took Honoria's hand in mine, and put into it the gold and silver which Miss Haldane had entrusted me with. She looked at the money with eyes in which tears were rising. I hailed this softened mood with satisfaction; it was the best of signs. "'And mind,' says Miss Haldane, 'you're not to leave Honoria till you see her comfortably provided for.' Then, having to dress for the ball, she sent me away to find you, and I don't for a moment doubt, if her duties had not kept her at the Hall, that she would have come out with me to look for you. Well, my dear, it was rather a wild goose chase I was engaged in, and I hardly knew which way to look. I wouldn't go to the village-

"Why?"

"Because Miss Haldane gave me to understand that it would be of no use to look there for you. 'You will most likely,' she said, 'find Honoria somewhere in the park or the woods,' and it was there I searched for you. You weren't in the park, so far as I could see, and I went to the woods, and had given you up, for I saw no trace of you, and was coming back over the bridge when I caught sight of a figure crossing that rickety structure. I suppose you were alarmed, for you struggled to get away from me, and now, my dear, you know all it is in my power to tell you. I hope you believe me?"

"Yes," said Honoria, "I believe you."

And now she burst into a passion of tears. Out of tenderness for her, and to strengthen her confidence in me, I turned my head, and waited till her passion was spent. Then I said—

"The question is now, What are we to do? I have only partly executed Miss Haldane's commission. She won't be satisfied unless I finish it. I've got to look after

you, you know."

"I must ask you something first," said Honoria.

"I'll answer anything you put to me."

"You searched the woods for me, and didn't find me."

"No, I did not find you, and I was greatly disappointed."

"Did you see anyone there?"

"Not a soul. The place was as quiet and lonely as a churchyard. I don't mind confessing I was glad to get out of it."

She wiped her eyes, and looked at me attentively.

"Well, my dear," I said with a smile, "do you think you can trust me?"

"I must trust you," she replied, "there is no one else."

"You must have shelter for the night. Shall we go to the village?"

"No," she said, shuddering; "not there, not there!"
"Perhaps you would like to get back to London?"

"Can I? It is so late!"

"I have a time-table in my pocket." I consulted it. As I have said, there was a last night train for London, and there was, moreover, an early morning train from the city, which would enable me to get back to Chudleigh Park in time for my appointment with Mr. Haldane. I told Honoria of the late train.

"I will take it," she said.

"And I will go with you," I said.

"There is no occasion. I can go alone"

"My dear," I said, "you will allow me, as a father, to know what is best. I would not let a daughter of my own travel alone so late as this, and I shall not let you. Besides,

I have promised Miss Haldane to see you in safe shelter to-night, and I shall insist upon carrying out her wishes."

She yielded without remonstrance, and we stepped on towards the station. It suited her humor and mine that our way lay through a bye road, where we were not likely to meet with any of the villagers, but we had first to traverse a path from which I saw the lights in the Manor House shining. We had a few minutes to spare, and I asked Honoria whether she would mind waiting for me alone while I ran to the Hall, my reason—with which I made her acquainted—being to endeavor to communicate to Miss Haldane the news of Honoria's safety.

"It will relieve Miss Haldane's mind," I said. "She is very anxious about you, and the knowledge that I am taking care of you will contribute to her enjoyment to-night."

"Yes, go," said Honoria.

"You will not run away," I said.

"I promise," she answered.

"Shall I give any message to Miss Haldane from you?"
"Say that I am humbly grateful," replied Honoria, and added, after a struggle with herself, "and that I am unworthy of her kindness."

"That, indeed, I shall not say," I remarked, and, leav-

ing Honoria in a secluded spot, I hastened to the Hall.

Good fortune befriended me; I saw Rachel, and she stepped aside with me.

"Tell Miss Haldane," I said, "that I have found Hon-

oria, and am going to London with her."

"It will make her happy to hear it," said Rachel; "she has been worrying about her. But, oh, Mr. Millington, what a trouble for you!"

"Not at all, my dear," I said. "I would do much more

than this to serve so sweet a lady."

"Mr. Millington," said Rachel, "I am so glad I know you, and that you are what you are. George was right."

"He is not wrong about many things, my dear," I said. "Not about me?" she asked, with a pretty archness.

"Not at all about you, my dear," I said, and I kissed the good girl, there being no one to see us. "I shall be

back in Chudleigh to-morrow. Any word for George?'

"My love, Mr. Millington." "I will give it him, Rachel. " My dear love," she said.

"Yes, Rachel. Good night, my dear."

"Good night, Mr. Millington."

I sped back to Honoria, with some slight misgivings as to whether I should find her; but she was faithful to her promise, and we arrived at the station before the train was there. Honoria kept herself out of view of the station master, and I succeeded in putting her in a third-class carriage without her being observed by any one who knew her. There were very few travellers by the train, and Honoria and I had a compartment to ourselves. It was during an endeavor to open a conversation with the poor girl that I noticed signs of exhaustion in her.
"You are faint," I said.

"I am hungry."

"How careless of me not to have thought of it," I said, but I had no time to say more, for Honoria's eyes closed, and she sank back in a swoon.

I could do nothing to relieve her, not being provided with food or drink. As she lay before me I could not help seeing how beautiful she was. Her features were faultless, and her dark hair and eyebrows, in contrast with her pallid face, added to her loveliness. A dangerous gift for a poor girl without parents or protector. My thoughts wandered to the man she called by the name of Austin, who was clearly her betrayer. I did not need to be told the story of the betrayal and the desertion; it was not, as he had said, a comedy, but he was right when he said that the world knew it by heart. Then I thought of Miss Haldane. She had no suspicion of Honoria's shame; when she became acquainted with it, as one day she must, how would she act? What a shock it would be to her pure heart to learn that Honoria had fallen so low! And for Honoria herself, what would be the end? Too well did I divine the meaning of the words she had spoken to her betrayer: You don't know what is before me-something that

makes me tremble to think of. It would be better for me to be dead than to live through what is coming unless you keep the promise you made me." Was this man, Austin, a friend of the Haldanes? The assignation in Chudleigh Woods with Honoria strengthened the presumption that he was no stranger to the locality, and therefore no stranger at the Manor House. Was he trusted by Miss Haldane? Had he succeeded in concealing his true character from her? In these reflections I saw all the materials for a pregnant drama of human life, although only one of its incidents had been, by accident, revealed to me.

My business, however, was not with the future, but the present. The poor insensible girl needed practical assistance, and while the train was speeding on I could not render it to her. Luckily we stopped at a station; unluckily there was no refreshment bar there. But I made a friend of the guard. For a consideration he supplied me with a slice of bread and butter, part of his night's meal, and water in a lemonade bottle. I moistened Honoria's lips with the water, and bathed her forehead with it. She

opened her eyes.

"Drink," I said, "andeat this slice of bread. When we

get to London you shall have something better."

"She thanked me gratefully, and I managed to sustain her spirits till we arrived at our destination. I hailed a cab and informing the driver of our needs, he took us to a coffee house, where a cup of hot coffee and some bread and meat put color into Honoria's cheeks. I, also, being rather used up, was thankful for the refreshment.

"Where to?" asked the driver.

Strangely, I had not thought of a place, and I asked Honoria whether there were any lodgings to which I could take her. No, she answered, she did not know of any. She had had rooms in a house, but had been turned out of them, and she would not return. It was now between three and four o'clock in the morning, and as I was standing in perplexity as to what to do, Honoria said:

"Leave me here; I can manage for myself."

"No," I said, "that is impossible. To leave you alone in London streets at such an hour—"

There was nothing for it but to take her to my house, and I gave the driver the address. I told Honoria what I had determined upon.

"There is only my son and a maid at home," I said, "but you can rest on the sofa till morning, when you will

be able to get a place that will suit you."

She looked at me, in wonder I thought, and we drove to Shepherd's Bush, where I dismissed the cab, and rang and knocked at my street door. I could not help smiling to myself as I thought of George's amazement when he saw me at such a time of night in the company of Honoria.

"Who's there?" George called out, presently, from the

passage.

"Open the door, old man," I cried.
"Why, dad!" exclaimed George, and the door was hastily thrown open. As I expected, George, who was in his trousers, without coat or waistcoat, fell back at sight of Honoria.

"Light the gas in the sitting-room, George," I said.

"Hurry up, old man."

He obeyed me in silence, and I conducted Honoria to the room, where she stood with her hand resting on the table, and with rather a thoughtful observance of George.

"This is a friend of Miss Haldane's," I said to him, "at whose request I have brought to London. It would not have been proper for her to travel alone in the middle of the night."

"Not at all, dad."

"All the houses and hotels are closed, so I brought her home here, where she will stay till morning."

"Quite right, dad." But George was obviously puzzled.
"You can have my bedroom if you like," I said, turning

to Honoria. "You must be dreadfully tired."

"I am ashamed to put you to so much trouble," she answered. "I will rest on the sofa if you will allow me."

"Very well. Is there anything more I can do for

"Nothing, thank you. There is no man in the world who would have done so much."

Her lips trembled, and I made a motion to George to leave the room.

"Will you shake hands with me?" asked Honoria.

"Indeed I will."

But to my surprise, when I held out my hand, she would not take it, and the thought crossed my mind that she had asked me to try me, and to be sure whether I was acquainted with her shame—in which case, she probably argued, I should have refused.

"If you can trust me," she said, with a grateful look,

"will you leave me alone here?"

"Of course I can trust you," I said heartily. "Try and get an hour's sleep. I may be able to see you in the morning before I go."

With that I left her, and went straight to George.

## CHAPTER VIII.

I PLACED him in possession of the facts, but although he was much interested in what I had to say of Honoria and Miss Haldane, he was naturally much more interested in what I had to say of Rachel Diprose. I soon satisfied him on that head, and he was immensely pleased at my approval of his pretty sweetheart.

"I have killed two birds with one stone," I said. "I have seen Rachel and like her, and I have rendered a service to

Miss Haldane."

"Yes," said George, "but the bird you went down to Chudleigh to kill is yet on the wing—your business with

Mr. Haldane."

"That is still to be let out of the trap," I observed.

"There's a train from Euston at 7.40, and I must catch it.

I can have a couple of hours' sleep if you'll undertake to call me."

"I'll do that, dad."

"Honoria must be dead tired, George, and if she falls

asleep won't wake up too readily. How does your work stand? Can you be spared till dinner time?"

"Yes."

"You had better remain in the house then, and be ready to assist her in any way she requires. You can't go to her room till she calls, or you hear her moving about; then ask her what you can do for her. Don't let her go away without breakfast. When people are in trouble they appreciate any little mark of attention. If I don't see her myself before I leave give her a note that I may as well write at once; I may not have time when I wake up."

I wrote the note there and then:

"Dear Miss Honoria,—My son, George, will assist you in any way you wish. I am called away on business which cannot be postponed. You can trust my son thoroughly. If you prefer to consult me instead of my son I shall be back to-morrow or the next day, and shall be glad to advise you. A line here will always reach me, and I will attend to it without delay. Hoping you are feeling strong and well, I am faithfully yours,—R. Millington."
Addressing the envelope simply "Miss Honoria," I

handed the note to George, and went to my room. The

moment I threw myself on my bed I was asleep.

Short as was my rest, it did me good. I jumped up when George called me, gave myself a wash in cold water, peeped into the garden, and was ready to start.

"You have ten minutes yet, dad," said George, "and

breakfast is ready for you."

There it was on the table, bread and butter cut, a pot of steaming tea, and a couple of rashers of bacon frizzling on a hot plate. And there, too, was a cab waiting at the door to take me to Euston.

"Seen nothing of Honoria, I suppose," I said, as I ate

the welcome meal.

"Nothing," said George. "There hasn't been a sound in the room.

"Don't forget my note, George."

"All right, dad."

Before I left the house I lingered a moment at Hon-

oria's door. All was quiet within. I stepped softly a vay,

and said to George as I got into the cab,

"I shall stop at Chudleigh Park to-night, at "the Brindled Cow." If you have anything particular to say you can wire me there, and anyhow you had better write this afternoon, so that I may receive your letter by first post

to-morrow morning."

We shook hands and I was soon speeding to Chudleigh Park, where I arrived at eleven o'clock. The landlord of "the Brindled Cow" looked rather curiously at me, I thought, and I immediately jumped at the cause. I had engaged a bed in his house last night and had not occupied it. I was considering whether I should tell him frankly I had been to London, or whether, for Honoria's sake, I should tell some other tale, when he said:

"Mr. Simpson has been quite anxious about you, sir."

"Has he? By the way I paid for my room last night,

though I didn't sleep in it."

"I had no fear of that, sir. I know a gentleman when I see one. Yes, quite anxious Mr. Simpson has been. He was here up to twelve o'clock last night, and has been twice this morning to ask after you."

"It is very kind of him. You told him 1 did not sleep

here?"

"Oh, yes; and he said it looked rather strange."

"Well, so it does," said I, my mind made up not to beat about the bush, "but the fact is, some business I had forgotten called me suddenly to London."

"What train did you take, sir?"

"The last."

"You must have got to London before morning."
"I did. It did not matter, my home being there."

"Certainly, sir. Will you want your room to-night?"

"Yes, and I shall dine here at about five."

"Alone, sir?"

"I can't exactly say."

"Very well, sir, there'll be enough for two."

Both he and I were thinking of Simpson with respect to my second dinner at "the Brindled Cow"—he, doubtless with a desire to increase the bill, I with half an idea that Simpson might endeavor to fasten himself on to me again. I ran up to my room to wash and brush before going to my appointment with Mr. Haldane, and then proceeded in the direction of the Manor House. I was not half way there when who should I see walking towards me but Simpson, the irrepressible!

"Why, here you are again," he said, speaking as if I was a clown in a pantomime. "I am glad to see you, that I am."

This excess of cordiality did not evoke any sympathetic response. I nodded, and said curtly I was glad because he was glad.

"When did you get back?" he inquired.

"Back from where?"

"From London."

"How do you know I have been there?" I asked blandly. Some men would have shown ill-temper, but a certain course of training I had gone through had armed me with weapons to cope with such an inquisitive person as Simpson.

"How do I know?" he said, jocosely. "Was I born

yesterday?"

"I should say not."

"Not by many a long day, Millington. Do you think anyone can take a ticket for London at our little local station without its being known?"

"You inquired there?"

"I was that anxious about you," said Simpson, "that I inquired everywhere."

"I am much indebted to you."

"Oh, it was only friendly. You would have done as much for me."

I thought to myself, "Does Simpson speak these words with direct meaning? Is he aware that I was formerly connected with a private inquiry office?"

What I said aloud was, "I am not so sure."

"Oh, yes, you would, Millington. Every man and woman in the world has got the hall mark, a note of interrogation; some large, some small."

"Yours is a large one, evidently."
"I don't deny it. Not in persons I don't care for, mind; but when a man collars me as you collared me with your free ways-after my own heart, Millington-I'm always anxious about him."

"If you're collared by many people," I remarked, "you

must have enough to do.

"Ah, but I'm not. Men like you are scarce." ("Now, is he chaffing me or not?" I thought.) "And you are a stranger in the village, remember. Anything might have happened to you. You might have been waylaid, and robbed, and murdered. I'll show you a place in Chudleigh Woods where a man was murdered some years ago, and to this day it remains a mystery. I thought of that when the landlord of "the Brindled Cow" told me last night——"

"At midnight," I interposed.

"At midnight, that you had not come home. I said to myself, 'Simpson you are responsible; you should have looked after him better; you should have been as hospitable and friendly to him as he was to you. A good many travelling showmen have been to the village to-day, and some of them are not to be trusted. You will never forgive yourself, Simpson, if anything has happened to Millington.' So what did I do? I went to Chudleigh Woods, with a pistol in my pocket, to look for you."

"A likely place for a stranger to go to on a dark night?" I said. "Did you think of that?"

"I only thought of your safety, Millington. If I'd been satisfied of that I should have laid my head on my pillow with a contented mind. I didn't find you in the woods. There was the bridge over the lake leading to 'em. You might have fallen in, and there would have been an end of you. I was positively uncomfortable, Millington. I didn't get to bed till two o'clock. And you"-with his eyes on my face—"look as if you'd had a bad night."

"It stands to reason that with such a journey I couldn't

have much sleep."

"Of course it does."

"Your mind's relieved now, I hope?"

"It is. I say, Millington"—and he poked his fingers in my ribs, and laughed—"you're a gay dog, you are!"

"Explain yourself, please," I said, a little stiffly.

"Let you city men alone for showing us country clowns a trick or two! We're not in it with you. Skim milk for us, cream for you. You do pick up the tit bits, you do!"
"Out with the mystery," I said.

"That's where it is," said Simpson; "it is a mystery. 'Who was she?' I said to the railway porter. 'Didn't see her face,' said he, 'and she didn't want me to. Carriage all to themselves.' Oh, you're a sly one, Millington!" He gave me a series of winks, and laughed heartily.

There was no misunderstanding his allusions. He had discovered that I had a female companion with me last night. Did he suspect that that companion was Honoria?

I made a dash at mystification.

"Suppose I brought her down with me yesterday to see the gay doings in the village?"

This rather staggered him—for a moment only, how-

ever.

"It won't do, Millington, it won't do. What, bring a lady all the way from bright London to see a tuppennyha'penny show like ours! A likely thing! And is it likely, either, that you would have left her to ramble about by herself all day, and have given me, a stranger, so much of your pleasant society? Try another, my boy, try another."

"I shall do nothing of the sort. There's no putting you off the scent, I can see that. But you must understand that there are some things a gentleman would rather not speak

about."

"A wink's as good as a nod to a blind horse," said Simpson. "Mum's the word. Let's have a word on another subject—that girl Honoria. What are you looking at your watch for?"

"What does a man generally look at his watch for?" I

retorted.

"To see the time," replied Simpson calmly, which made me rather ashamed of myself for showing temper. When you get hot and the other man keeps cool, you give him an advantage over you. "Have you got an appointment?"

"I must be at the Hall by twelve o'clock."

"To see Mr. Haldane. I wish you joy. I caught a glimpse of him half an hour ago and he looked as black as thunder. It wants a quarter of an hour of twelve yet, and it won't take you five minutes to get to the Hall. This is a fine park, isn't it? Wish it was mine without any mortgages on it. Mortgages are the very devil. A man may be the master of a great estate, and it may be no better than a white elephant. I was speaking of that Honoria. What do you think? Since Miss Haldane took her to the Hall last night, nothing's been heard of her."
"Indeed."

"Where can she have got to? I've hunted high and low for her, but it was like looking for a needle in a bottle of hay. Singular, isn't it? But I see you want to get rid of me. You've got Mr. Haldane on the brain. Hope to meet you by-and-by. Take care of yourself."

"I'll try to."

I asked myself as he walked away, whistling a lively air, whether the interest he exhibited in my movements proceeded from mere idle motives or from a deeper cause, and I could not answer the question. To account for a direct motive required a more comprehensive knowledge of Simpson than I at present possessed.

Rachel Diprose was looking out for me, and ran to me

smiling, before I reached the Hall door.

"I am so glad you have got back safe," she said. "What

a tiring journey you must have had!"

"It was rather tiring, Rachel," I replied, "but I am not an old man yet. George comes of a good stock. You've had a late night of it, too, I expect."

"Yes; the ball wasn't over till four o'clock, and Miss

Haldane stopped to the last. Do I look tired?"

"You look as fresh as a daisy, my dear. I gave your love to George, and he sent his to you. I astonished him by making my appearance so unexpectedly, and at such an hour in the morning, or rather night. I suppose Miss Haldane is not up yet."

"O, yes, she is, and that is one reason why I wanted to

speak to you at once."

"To hear about Honoria," I said. "Well, tell Miss Haldane that we got to London all right, and that I took her to my house. When I left this morning she was asleep, and when she wakes George will look after her. I wrote a line to Honoria, saying I would be back to-morrow, and that I would be ready to help her in any way she desired. The poor girl is very unhappy, and very grateful to Miss Haldane."

"So she ought to be, but I don't want George to have much to do with her."

This remark made me suspect that Rachel did not regard Honoria in the same light as her young mistress. The tittle-tattle of the servants and the village people had reached her ears, and had produced its natural effect upon her mind. I did not think any the worse of Rachel for that. When boys and girls become men and women it is as well that they should be in a position to understand certain things. Keeping young people in ignorance of natural laws is productive of no end of mischief.

"Don't you be troubled about George, my dear," I said, pinching her cheek. "He is a good lad, and there is only

one little woman in the world for him."

"There is another thing," said Rachel, "about Mr. Simpson. He has been poking about everywhere, and asking everybody if they knew anything about Honoria. Miss Haldane thinks it better for her—for Honoria, I mean—that nothing should be said about her going to London, and about you having anything to do with her. And, Mr. Millington, I shouldn't like Miss Haldane's name to be mixed up in it."

"I understand you. Tell Miss Haldane that Simpson has been at me already, and that he got nothing out of me.

I'm a match for Simpson, my dear."

"Don't quarrel with him, Mr. Millington."

"I don't intend to. I rather enjoy playing a game of hoodwinking. Now I must go and see Mr. Haldane, who wants to speak to me about something or other. I shall stay at "the Brindled Cow" to-night, and shall return to

London to-morrow morning by the 11.30 train."

The clock struck twelve as I sent my card up to Mr. Haldane. In matters of business I have always been a punctual man.

## CHAPTER IX.

MR. HALDANE was in his library, a noble room, lined with book shelves. He looked at his watch as I entered, said "Good-morning," and pointed to a chair at the table by

which he was sitting.

"I sent for you, Mr. Millington," he said, plunging into business at once, "because I believe you are a man to be trusted. I require such a man to undertake a certain private matter, for which I am prepared to pay liberally. I gather from your reply to my letter and your presence here that you are willing to undertake the business."

In case I wished to retreat this was cutting the ground from under my feet, but I recognised that Mr. Haldane had put the natural construction upon my response to his request, and that I was to a certain extent compromised.

Still I said—

"May I know first, sir, what the business is?"

"No," he replied, and I saw that he was somewhat surprised, "it is a private and delicate matter, and cannot be disclosed to anyone who is not directly engaged in it. Did you come to see me out of simple idleness?"

It would never have done to tell him that the principal motive of my business to Chudleigh Park was to see my

son's sweetheart, so I answered-

"Not at all, sir; only I have retired from active work,

and am living upon my savings."

"I congratulate you; but the fact of your not being actively associated with any inquiry office is an additional recommendation to me. It affords a more complete assurance of absolute privacy."

I perceived from his manner that if I wished to be of service to Miss Haldane, and to be free to visit Rachel Diprose at Chudleigh Park when I desired (as I did wish in the interests of George) it was necessary for me to decide promptly. Mr. Haldane was clearly a gentleman not to be trifled with.

"I will undertake the business, sir," I said.

"You understand that what passes between us is in absolute confidence, and that the most implicit secrecy must be observed."

"I understand, sir; but I must make one remark. Speaking in the dark, not knowing yet the nature of the commission, it may be necessary for me to employ some person to assist me."

"It may be. In that case you will look out for a reliable person, who must not know that you are working for me. Plainly, Mr. Millington, my name does not come

into the affair.'

"Then there will be no occasion to mention it, sir, and

I can give you the promise of implicit secrecy."

"Good. Now, Mr. Millington, I want, as far as possible, nothing written upon paper concerning this—this commission; no memoranda lying about which a prying person might get hold of. The utmost caution must be observed, and the communications which pass between us must be personal. If you have occasion to write me any letters do not refer to the matter—simply say that you are coming to see me on a certain day at a certain hour, and I shall understand that you are coming to report progress."

"It shall be done as you direct, sir." The arrangement suited me; it would give me opportunities to see Rachel

and Miss Haldane.

"Your memory is good, Mr. Millington?"

"Excellent, sir."

"I have written a statement respecting the commission"—he seemed to like the word, and to be glad to use it instead of "business"—"which I propose to read to you. When you get the particulars in your mind distinctly I shall burn the paper."

- Am I at liberty, sir, to ask you any questions as you read?"

"For the purpose of perfect clearness, yes; but no ques-

tions that do not directly affect the matter."

"I shall keep as strictly to the point as I can, sir."
"Draw a little closer to the table."

While I did so he went to the door by which I had entered, locked it, and returned to his seat. He then took a paper from a drawer in the table, and proceeded to read in a low clear voice:

"In the early part of the year 1867 a gentleman of the name of Julius Clifford took passage for New York in the steamer Circassia. Among the passengers on board was a young woman named Adeline Ducroz. She was in service as lady's maid to a mistress whose name it is unnecessary to mention."

I interrupted him. "I beg your pardon, sir. It may

be very necessary. I speak as an expert."

An expression of annoyance appeared in his face as he

said, "It may have escaped Mr. Clifford's memory."

"Then of course it cannot be stated now. But it will not be a difficult matter to obtain it from the agents of the vessel."

"If there is need for it," said Mr. Haldane "I think you will find there is no need. What are you writing on

that paper?"

"Only the names of the persons you are introducing. They are strange to me, and I must get familiar with them. I shall require some latitude with respect to names and dates, and what I write will not pass out of my possession."

"If it must be," he said, and proceeded to read from the document before him:

"Adeline Ducroz was twenty-two or twenty-three years of age and was unhappy in her situation. She confided her troubles to Mr. Clifford, who pitied and sympathized with her, and when she asked him what she was to do, he advised her to leave her mistress and get another situation upon her arrival in New York. She followed only a part of this advice. She quitted service, and instead of seeking

fresh employment, threw herself upon the protection of Mr. Clifford. Believing himself to be in some degree responsible for her friendless position, he stood by her, and they lived together in New York for five months."

"As man and wife?" I asked.

- "Surely the statement is sufficiently explicit," replied Mr. Haldane.
- "Acting as a confidential agent," I urged, "it will be well to make things as clear as possible. They were not married in church?"
  - "No, they were not married in church."

"By registrar?"

" No."

"But they lived together in New York as man andwife?"

"Yes."

"Publicly?"

"Yes, I suppose we may say publicly."

"She passing by the name of Ducroz or Clifford?"

"By the name of Clifford."

"Making purchases probably as Mrs. Clifford?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Clifford paying debts which she incurred?"

"Yes."

"Paying these debts by cheque?"

"Many of them."

"I assume it would be easy to establish all these details by evidence?"

"No doubt."

"Thank you, sir. Kindly go on."
"First," said Mr. Haldane, "I should like you to give me your reasons for these questions."

"I understand that I was not here to express opinions,

but I will answer you if you insist upon it."

"There is no reason for concealment. Express your

opinion, or reason, or whatever you call it."

"It is scarcely an opinion, sir; it is rather the statement of a fact. Mr. Clifford and Miss Ducroz, living in the State of New York in these circumstances, were legally man and wife. That is all."

"We will pass that over. Mr. Clifford has heard some nonsense to that effect before, but he is an Englishman living under English institutions."

He paused, probably expecting me to contest the question; but I was not there to argue, and I was silent. Pres-

ently he turned again to the document.

"At the end of this time they came together to England, and lived in various places, and visited the Continent. Disagreements, however, started up between them, and they separated. I find," said Mr. Haldane, looking up from the document, "that this is all Mr. Clifford has written. You understand it?"

"Yes," I replied, "it is very simple."

"The paper, then, may be destroyed," said Mr. Haldane, and he put it in the fire and watched it smoulder away.

I thought the document brief enough, and its termination strangely sudden. I knew, however, that clients, as a rule, never tell the whole of the truth—only just as much as suits them, leaving you to guess the rest. It is a short-sighted policy, prompted by a common human weakness.

"What I wish you to do," said Mr. Haldane, "on behalf of Mr. Clifford, is to ascertain the precise particulars of this woman's career and destiny after the separation. Whatever funds are required to prosecute the inquiry will be supplied by me, and I will give you now a cheque in advance."

It was already written, and he detached it from his cheque book, and pushed it towards me. The amount was £200, "payable to bearer," and the cheque was not crossed. I thought the introduction of the word "destiny" in Mr. Haldane's last speech somewhat peculiar, and I asked for an explanation of it.

"Mr. Clifford believed," said Mr. Haldane, "that the

woman died shortly after the separation."

"Has he any reason now to believe that she is not dead?'

"Some rumor has reached him, and that is why he desires the matter to be thoroughly sifted."

"Is it only now that the rumour has reached him?"

"There was an attempt," replied Mr. Haldane, "some

years ago to blackmail him in connection with this feature in the affair."

"Did he resist it?"

"He did not; he submitted to it."

He did not furnish me with any particulars of this successful attempt to blackmail, and I did not ask him for them. The impression he produced upon me in the disclosures he had made was that he had presented me with a very imperfect skeleton of an important secret, and was purposely concealing from me much that would have naturally aided me in the task I had undertaken. However, that was his affair; his conduct was foolish, but if anybody suffered it would be himself. There was one question, however, the answer to which would give me some sort of a starting point for my investigations.

"In what part of England," I asked, "did Mr. Clifford

and Miss Ducroz separate?"

"In no part of England. They were in Paris at the time."

"Did they remain in Paris after the separation?"

"Mr. Clifford left for England immediately."

"And Miss Ducroz?"

"Remained, I believe, in Paris."

"I should like to know the name of the hotel they stopped at before the final disagreement."

"I will endeavor to obtain it, and will send it on to

London to you."

After a few more words had passed between us I wished Mr. Haldane good morning, and rose to go. Forgetting that the door was locked I tried the handle, and was aware that at the same moment some person was trying it from the outside.

"Turn the key," said Mr. Haldane.

I did so, and as I opened the door a gentleman entered the room with the observation.

"You're tiled in precious close, Haldane."

I started at the voice. It was that of the gentleman who had met Honoria in Chudleigh Woods last night He gave me a sharp look, and passed me, and as I had no

possible excuse for lingering, I left the room closing the door after me. I had matter for fresh thought now. This gentleman, whom Honoria called Austin, was a privileged visitor at the Hall; his manner was that of one who was very much at home there. His unceremonious entrance into Mr. Haldane's room proclaimed this, and there was a freedom in his bearing which could only be accounted for on the assumption that he and his host were on the most intimate and familiar terms. But I was not quite satisfied with this assumption, natural as it was, there seem to me to be something more in their relations to each other—as indicated in the few words I heard Honoria's betrayer utter-something unrevealed. I was ready enough to place the worst construction on everything in connection with this gentleman; the light in which he had presented himself in his interveiw with Honoria proved him to be heartless, ruthless, and cynical, and it was not likely that I should regard him with any favor. Especially disagreeable was the reflection that, being on such familiar terms with Mr. Haldane, he might be equally so with Rachel's tender-hearted young mistress. I had come down to Chudleigh Park for something. Yesterday morning I was a free man, with scarcely a care, and in the full enjoyment of as many moderate pleasures as a reasonable being could wish for, and here was I now plunged into the heart of two mysteries, which were taking strong hold upon me.

As I walked slowly through the park to the village I heard hasty steps behind me. Turning, I saw Rachel endeavoring to overtake me, and I waited for her to come up. The sight of her bright eager face was quite a relief

to me.

"As you are going away to-morrow morning," she said, "I want to see as much as I can of you."

"The want is mutual, my dear," I said; "if you are

bound for the village we will walk together."

She was bound for the village, and we walked side by side drawing each other out in honest guileless fashion, I with a desire to learn what kind of daughter-in-law she

would be to me, she with a desire to learn what kind of a father-in-law I would be to her. Our conversation ran chiefly upon George, and if ever a man's ears burnt, his must have been in a blaze. It was George this, George that, and George the other, as if he were in himself the sun, moon, and stars. It was a theme upon which we perfectly agreed, and we should have continued speaking of it till we parted had it not suddenly occurred to me that Rachel could give me some information of the gentleman I was thinking of when she joined me. So I turned the conversation upon the guests at the Hall, and the intimate friends of the Haldane family. She went over the names of the gentlemen, but there was no Austin among them. Then, at my prompting, she gave me a description of their personal appearance till she came to one that answered to the person I was curious about. She described him to the life, and even mimicked his voice and gestures so cleverly that I looked at her in admiration.

"What is the name of this gentleman?" I asked.

"Mr. Redwood."

"Do you know his Christian name, Rachel?"

"Louis," she replied.

# CHAPTER X.

Louis Redwood. If that was the man, and that his true name, he had been doubly treacherous to Honoria. That it was his true name I did not doubt, for it was scarcely likely that an intimate friend of the Haldanes would, or could successfully, masquerade in his visits to their home; whereas, to deceive a girl as simple and credulous as Honoria was as easy as putting on a glove. My experiences in the office of Barlow and Co. had taught me not to rush too hastily at conclusions, and had, moreover, furnished me with at least half a dozen instances of personal resemblance which had led to more or less remarkable complications. I proceeded, therefore, to probe this particular matter more

closely. Repeating the names of the guests at the Hall, as they had been mentioned to me by Rachel, I purposely introduced the name of Austin. Rachel interrupted me.

"No," she said; "there is no one there of that name."
"I was thinking of another person," I said, and I finished the list correctly. "Mr. Redwood appears to be a privileged visitor. He must be on very intimate terms at the Hall."

"He is," said Rachel.

"And is, I suppose, a favorite there."

"Not with everybody. He and Mr. Haldane are together a great deal. I am not in love with him myself."

"How about Miss Haldane?"

"Oh, no, not at all," said Rachel, in a decided tone. "Mr. Millington, I'll tell you something if you'll keep it to yourself."

"You may depend I'll keep it to myself, my dear."

"Well, Mr. Redwood pays Miss Haldane a great deal of attention; he rides out with her, he takes her in to dinner, and he sent to London for the most beautiful bouquet you ever saw for the ball last night. I can't quite say whether Miss Haldane sees it as I do, but if ever a gentleman showed he was in love, Mr. Redwood is showing it to her."

"She confides in you, Rachel."

"Yes, Mr. Millington, she does, but she doesn't tell me everything. The worst of it is Mr. Haldane is on Mr. Redwood's side."

"Perhaps," I hazarded, "it is by her father's persuasion that your young mistress accepts Mr. Redwood's attentions."

"That's exactly it," said Rachel. "Mr. Redwood is rich, I suppose."

"They say there's no end to his money. He lives in London, and gives grand parties and keeps races horses."

"Ah, a fashionable swell." I was familiar with the names of the gentlemen celebrated in the racing world, and I ran them over in my mind without meeting with Mr. Redwood's. That was of no account, however, as he probably raced, like many others, under an assumed name. "You have forgotten to tell me something, Rachel."

"I don't think so, Mr. Millington."

'Think a little further," I said, with a smile. "We are talking about Miss Haldane, you know. Now, she is a very beautiful, sweet, and charming young lady. No wonder that Mr. Redwood is in love with her. Why, there must be scores of others."

"I don't say he is the only one."

"It isn't in nature he should be—it isn't in nature he shouldn't have a rival." Rachel colored up, and moved her head rather nervously this way and that. "Don't run away with the idea that I'm poking my nose into secrets out of mere curiosity. It strikes me there's a pot on the fire with mischief in it, and with trouble in it as well, and who knows whether I mayn't be able to keep it from boiling over? Trust me, Rachel, and just whisper whether Miss Haldane isn't in love with some one."

"I will trust you, Mr. Millington, but it mustn't go any

further. She is."

"I thought as much, Where is he?"

"Thousands and thousands of miles away."

"And Mr. Redwood has the field all to himself. A young gentleman, Rachel?"
"Yes."

"Rich?"

"No. He went away to make his fortune, and then he is coming back to marry her."

"Is this a secret arrangement between them?"

"Oh, no; Mr. Haldane knows all about it."

"How long has the young gentleman been gone?"

"Over a year."

"And when is he expected back?"

"There's no saying. He hasn't been very fortunate up to now."

"Meanwhile he and Miss Haldane correspond?"

"Of course they do."

And meanwhile, I thought, Mr. Haldane is exerting himself to bring about a match between his daughter and Mr. Louis Redwood. In my opinion it was altogether a bad business. The union of the young girl with the

plausible, treacherous man of the world could bring nothing but unhappiness to her. It was no business of mine, but I could not help wishing I could do something to save Miss Haldane from the pit that was being dug for her. It lay in my power, certainly, to disclose Honoria's story to her, which would show the utter baseness of the man who was striving to win her affections, but would it be right for me to reveal a secret which by accident had come to my knowledge? It was not as if I were one of the family; I was an entire stranger to all concerned in this unfortunate tangle of circumstance; and if I did anything at all, the utmost caution must be observed. My cogitations did not lead to any satisfactory result; they left me at the exact point I started from, and instead of wasting any more time upon useless speculation, I bent my mind upon the actual business which claimed my attention. When we arrived at the village Rachel left me with a promise that she would see me again before I went back to London.

"I think Miss Haldane would like to see you, too," she

said.

"I shall be ready to wait on her at any moment," I re-

plied.

There was a little commission with which Miss Haldane had entrusted me, and which I had not attended to. This was to go to Mrs. Porter and pay her for the brooch and earrings which she alleged Honoria had stolen from her. It did not take long. I found Mrs. Porter much milder-tempered than she had been on the previous evening; the night's reflections had probably shown her that it would not be exactly judicious to continue attacking Honoria's character with so powerful a champion as Miss Haldane ready to defend her. When I had explained the purport of my visit, she said—

"I'd rather not say anything more. Let bygones be by-

gones.

But I felt it would be best to take the sting out of a

woman who could not control her temper.

"What value do you place upon the ornaments? Were they gold?"

This question brought a remarkably uncomfortable expression into her face, and I laughed to myself, convinced from her manner that the articles were brass, and that she knew they were.

"I bought 'em for gold," she said.

"Or gilt," I suggested.

"Or gilt," she acquiesced. "I ain't much of a judge."

Inquiring how much she had given for them, she named a sum which proved the quality of the lost treasure. Gold brooch and earrings are not to be purchased for fourteen shillings. I wrote out a receipt for the money, which I

insisted upon her signing.

"Now, Mrs. Porter," I said, "I will give you a little sensible advice and a little information. The jewellery was brass, what they call pinchbeck; you could not else have bought them for five times fourteen shillings. I don't blame you for telling your neighbors they are gold; it was a piece of pardonable vanity. The tramp who stole them from you tried to pawn them, I dare say, and discovered that they were worthless. You have signed a receipt and have got the money, and if you ever say another word against Honoria you will be made to suffer for it. There's a heavy punishment for libel."

"I'll never open my lips about her," said the frightened

woman. "I only wish I'd never set eyes upon her.

"From what I have heard," I said, severely, "you have reason to be thankful for it. Miss Haldane paid you liberally."

And having done my best to clear Honoria's character,

I left Mrs. Porter a wiser, if not a better woman.

At the "Brindled Cow" a surprise awaited me, in the shape of a telegram from George.

"The young lady has vanished. Letter to-morrow. "GEORGE."

If this meant anything, it meant that Honoria had taken her departure from my house without George's knowledge, and that I should receive a letter in the morning explaining matters.

I was not greatly surprised at Honoria's disappearance. From a young woman in her position, with a mind so illregulated, anything might be expected. There was no special reason why she should trust me. True, I had been kind to her, but so must Mr. Redwood have been during the early days of their acquaintanceship. He had deceived her, why not I? The very story I had related of Miss Haldane's anxious desire to befriend her might, in her view, have been trumped up. I might even have been an emissary employed by Mr. Redwood to further entangle her and secure her silence. All these conjectures were feasible, and I could find no fault with Honoria for entertaining them, if any such conjectures had led to her flying from my house as she had flown from the Hall. My chief concern was for Miss Haldane, who must be told of the occurrence, and whose kind intentions were to be frustrated.

I had ordered dinner for five o'clock, and it was now three. What should I do to beguile the intervening couple of hours? There was no Simpson handy, with whom I could play bagatelle and cross-purposes at one and the same time. There was Mr. Haldane's business to think over, certainly; but I have habits which are fixed. One of these is, where a matter is not immediately pressing, to set it aside for serious consideration until a night has passed by, and this I had determined to do with the communication Mr. Haldane had made to me, postponing all judgment upon it till to-morrow. In the forming of just conclusions I have found this habit of value to me; during the interval the mind lies fallow, but gathers strength, and there is less likelihood of its wandering from the main road. Chudleigh Woods held out temptations for a ramble, and to Chudleigh Woods I went.

Wandering through its lovely mazes, I should probably have been late for dinner had I not heard approaching footsteps. Bending forward I saw coming towards me Mr. Louis Redwood and my good friend Simpson. I stepped aside, so as to be out of sight, and they passed without seeing me. I made no attempt to follow them, fearing I might be discovered, but the association of these two

men seemed to be another link in the chain of circumstances in which I was now involved. Without being able to hear a word that was spoken, there were indications that Mr. Redwood was laying down the law to his companion, who was listening with humble attention. Was Simpson, then, Mr. Redwood's creature, in his pay? I had learned from Rachel that he had been in Mr. Haldanes service many years, and although Mr. Haldane and Mr. Redwood were friends, I had observed something in the latter gentleman's manner, when he entered the library after my interview with Mr. Haldane, which seemed to denote a sense of mastership. If my impression—which I admit was formed upon a very slender foundation-were correct, there was a traitorous touch in this secret interview in Chudleigh Woods between Mr. Haldane's friend and Mr. Haldane's confidential valet. For secret interview it was. I had come to the Woods for pleasure—not so they. Simpson's smug face was serious, and Mr. Redwood's not less so. Here was I, mixed up in plots and counterplots, and strangely interested in matters in which, up till now, I had obtained the barest glimpses. These plots and counterplots revolved, to all appearance, round the fates and fortunes of two young girls, Miss Haldane and Honoria. Slowly and thoughtfully I walked to the village and entered the "Brindled Cow."

### CHAPTER XI.

AND there, at the bar, was Simpson, smooth, smug, and smiling.

"I've been looking everywhere for you," he said, "and wondering where you had gone to."
"I've been killing time," I said, "for want of some-

thing better to do."

"Mooning about," said Simpson, with a wink. "You mustn't come breaking our women's hearts with your London ways. Upon my soul, Millington, it's hardly fair."

"Get along with you," I said jocosely, entering into his humor; if he could play his game, I could play mine, "I'm the father of a family. You're only a boy compared with me. Have you dined?"

"You don't mean to say you're going to ask me to din-

ner again?" exclaimed Simpson.

"No," I said, smiling into his smiling face, "I only inquired out of curiosity. It wouldn't run to it, two days

running. Turn and turn about, you know."

He laughed, though he was manifestly disappointed, and ready to join me on the smallest encouragement, and said, "Let Londoners alone for being clever; country clowns aren't in it with them;" and so forth and so forth. After indulging in an interchange of pleasantries with him, I went up to dinner alone. This may not have been considered good policy, my aim being to completely propitiate Simpson, but I think it was. I did not want him to suspect I wished him to look upon me as a fool; he knew I was nothing of the kind, and to overact my part, as some actors on the stage do, would have been but exposing my game. In dealing with a shrewd, cunning man, there are many things to take into account. I did not hurry over my dinner, either, for the sake of Simpson who, I knew well enough was waiting for me in the bar below. I was right; he was there when I went down.

"Thought you would like your revenge at bagatelle,"

he said.

"I should," I said; "but you must have a drink first."
"With pleasure," he said. "When I see you in London

it will be my turn."

"You don't think I was serious," I said, "when I spoke of turn and turn about. If you did, you're not half as sharp

as I thought."

We played at bagatelle, and for the sake of appearance I won a game or two, but the balance was on his side, and he was very merry over it. When we had played eight or nine games I said I was tired, and would take a walk.

"I'll go with you," said Simpson.

This convinced me of his intention to keep watch upon

my movements. It was as good as a declaration that he believed I had something to do with Honoria, that he had communicated his suspicion to Mr. Redwood, and that he had received instructions from that gentleman not to lose sight of me. I did not mind. I had no expectation of seeing Rachel or Miss Haldane till morning, and I allowed Simpson to believe he was fooling me.

"Where to?" he inquired, when we were outside.

"Anywhere," I answered.

"Let's go to the woods," he suggested. "I'll show you

where that murder was committed.

I hesitated a moment. "You're such a devil of a fellow," I said, "going about with pistols in your pocket. It's

against the law, my boy."

He laughed. "Licensed to carry a gun, Millington. What's the difference between a gun and a pistol? I don't carry one commonly, though; I only took it with me last night because I was alone. We won't go if you're frightened."

"Frightened! Here, lay hold of my hand, and grip it

as hard as you can."

It was my left hand I held out to him, being short of two fingers on my right. It was what they call ambi-dexterous, and my left hand is as muscular as my right. Simpson gripped and squeezed me, and I let him have his way for a few moments; then I put power into my fingers, which tightened round his so vigorously that he screamed with pain. I could have crushed every bone in his hand. When I had given him enough I loosened my grip.

"What do you say now," I asked, "to a man like me

being frightened?"

He cried and laughed at the same time—his cries being genuine, his laughter sham.

"You're a bit of steel," he said, with tears in his eyes.

"Let's go to the woods," I said.

It was he who hesitated now, but he put on a show of bravery, and we walked to the park, and crossed the bridge over the lake. On our way, I succeeded in setting him at his ease; said that from boyhood I was famous for my

strength, that I was proud of it, and that nothing roused me more than to question my courage.

"I'm a lamb generally," I said; "but call me a coward, and you fire my blood."

"I'll take care for the future," said Simpson, and his sly,

cringing tone made me laugh in my sleeve.

He took me to the spot where the murder had been committed. It was a cruel murder, that of a young girl; you read of such in to-day's newspapers; and like too many deeds of this description, the monster who perpetrated it had never been caught. As Simpson pioneered me through the woods I observed that he cast many covert and curious glances at me, the object of which was to discover if the place was quite new to me. The slightest sign of familiarity from me would have been a confession that I had met Honoria there last night. I was careful to give no sign. I should have been a bungler indeed had I not seen through Simpson's transparent devices. Neither upon our return to the "Brindled Cow" did I exhibit any symptoms of fatigue, and it was only when Simpson bade me an affectionate good night that I retired to my room. I smiled to think that Simpson went away no wiser than he came. Had I been a nervous man I should have had dreams on this night, but I am by constitution strong and healthy, and I enjoyed a dreamless sleep of eight good hours, and rose early enough in the morning to be standing at the door of the "Brindled Cow" when the local postman came up with the letters. There were two, one for the landlord, one for me. I took possession of mine, which, as I expected, was from George. It was short and to the point:

"My dear father,—My telegram will have told you the The young lady you brought home has gone. How she went and when she went I cannot say. All I know is that I waited in the house till one o'clock, when I thought it time to give her a call. I went to her door and knocked over and over again. There was no answer. 'What's wrong?' thought I, and I tried the door. It was unlocked, and going into the room, it was empty. At whatever time she went she must have crept away like a cat. I searched

about, and found a paper, which I enclose. Hope to see your old face to-morrow. The house isn't the same without you in it. Give my love to Rachel, and say I am all right.

—Your affectionate son, GEORGE."

The paper George referred to was an envelope, contain-

ing an enclosure. I drew it out, and read:

"Austin,—I am going to put an end to myself, and you have driven me to it. You are my murderer. You have ruined and deserted me, and I have nothing to live for. Be kinder to the next girl you bring to shame than you have been to HONORIA."

It was the paper which she had written on the bridge last night, before endeavoring to carry out her wretched intention. I made a memorandum of the incident and of the circumstances under which the paper came into my possession, and having dated and signed it, put it in my pocketbook. It was, as I was aware, legally useless, but it was, at least, moral evidence against Mr. Louis Redwood, if at any time in the future its production would assist towards any good end. Honoria must have dropped it by accident in my room, otherwise it could not have fallen into George's hands.

There was nothing left for me to do in Chudleigh except to see Miss Haldane if she wished, and to take leave of Rachel, so I got my breakfast over quickly, and settled

my bill at the "Brindled Cow."

"I suppose," I said to the landlord, "that I can find a bed here if I come this way again."

"I promise you that, sir," said the landlord.

I was tempted to make some inquiries of him respecting Mr. Redwood, but I held my tongue. Simpson was a regular customer at the "Brindled Cow," and the questions I put would almost certainly reach his ears. Instead, therefore, of taking a step in that direction I took another tack, and spoke a few words in praise of Simpson, which it would gratify that very astute individual to have retailed to him. My observation of the village and its inhabitants convinced me that it and they were under the absolute domination of Mr. Haldane. All the surrounding property and every

house on it belonged to him; no leases were granted; the villagers were yearly tenants, liable to be turned away at any time. The power wielded by the master of the estate was autocratic in the most complete sense of the word. Thinking of this as I strolled towards the park, looking out for Rachel, some remarks made by Simpson came to my mind: "This is a fine park, isn't it? Wish it was mine, without any mortgages on it. Mortgages are the very devil. A man may be the master of a great estate, and it may be no better than a white elephant." There is never smoke without fire, and these words, for which there must be some foundation, seemed to indicate that Mr. Haldane's tenure was not as safe as it appeared to be. A fair outside is all very well, but there generally something darker hidden within.

There was Rachel coming to meet me. What greatly impressed me in favor of George's sweethear's were her cheerfulness and briskness. I saw that they were natural to her, and that her disposition and good temper would brighten a home. Good heart, clear eye, brisk movement, pleasant voice, white teeth, pretty face, compact figure—what more could any father wish for in a wife for the son he loved, add to this common-sense, and you get very close to perfection.

Of course, after bidding me good morning, her first question was,

"Have you heard from George?"

"I have, my dear, and there's news in his letter. Honoria's disappeared again."

"O, dear! But you know where she is?"

"Not the slightest idea. She left withou a word, and without George seeing her."

"I'm not sorry for that," said Rachel.

"George says she must have crept away like a cat."

"Is that all he says?"

"Nothing more about Honoria."

"But about anybody else?"

"Will be glad when I get home again."

"I wonder," said Rachel, "will he be such a tease as

you are. The idea of you trying to make me believe that he could write you a letter without saying a word about me!"

"What a forgetful old father-in-law I shall make: There is something about you. Here it is. 'Give my love to Rachel, and say I am all right.' I hope that is satisfactory?"

"I shall not tell you," she said, saucily; "I shall tell

George. Now come and see Miss Haldane."

The young lady was in the tennis-court giving instructions to a gardener, whom she left directly she saw me. As briefly as possible, for my time was running short, I related what had occurred, making, however, no reference to what Honoria had written on the bridge. Miss Haldane was visibly distressed at the news.

"But what is to be done, Mr. Millington?" she asked.

"Nothing," I replied, "except to wait and hear from Honoria. If she writes to me I am ready, as I told her, to do anything I can to assist her. She thoroughly understands that you are her friend, and whether she will allow

us to aid her depends now upon herself."

"Honoria is proud," said Miss Haldane, "and the cruel and unjust accusation brought against her by Mrs. Porter before all the people, and the way she was treated by our servants here—I have heard something of that, Mr. Millington—may have had a bad effect upon her. She may look upon us as her enemies—poor Honoria! If she does not write, will you try and find her?"

"I promise faithfully I will. There is one good thing—she is not without means. She has the money you gave me for her, and she cannot want for a few weeks. I must bid you good morning, Miss Haldane; I have to catch a

train."

"I will not detain you; but I owe you some money. You paid Mrs. Porter something, did you not? I was

almost forgetting it."

I had forgotten it myself, and I now told her the particulars of my interview with the woman, and showing her the receipt for the fourteen shillings asked her what I should do with it.

"You had better keep it," she replied. "It must not be given to Honoria, for it would make her think that we believed, after all, she took the things, and that we had bought her off. I am glad Mrs. Porter can say nothing more against her. What do I owe you, Mr. Millington? Pray do not leave out anything, or I shall never dare to ask you to do me another service. It must have been an expensive journey to London and back, and please remember that I have plenty of money."

I pencilled some figures and added them up, and she handed me the money, amply repaying me for my trouble by thanking me cordially and shaking hands with me.

"I can spare you, Rachel," she said to her maid, with an affectionate smile. "You can go with Mr. Millington to the station if you wish."

"Thank you, miss," said Rachel, and we were presently

in the park.

"I shall be here again in a few weeks," I said to Rachel, "perhaps sooner. I am doing some private business for Mr. Haldane, but it must not be known that anything of that kind brings me here."

"I shall not speak about it," said Rachel, "but I should

like to ask you something."

"What is it, my dear? I'll answer if I can."

"Is the private business anything to do with Miss Haldane."

"Nothing."

"Or with Mr. Redwood?"

" Nothing."

"Thank you, Mr. Millington. That is all I want to know."

Then we fell to upon our pet theme—George—and chatted amicably and pleasantly till we were about half-way to the station, when I stopped.

"We'll say good bye here, Rachel."
"But I'm coming to see you off."

"No, my dear. If I'm not mistaken I shall have another person to see me off, if he doesn't waylay me before I get to the station, and I should prefer that he doesn't see us too much together."

"Who is the other person?"

"Simpson. He has taken a violent liking to me."

"Has he?" said Rachel, with sudden alarm. "Anything to do with Mr. Haldane's private business?"

"No, my dear, though he wouldn't have the slightest

objection to having his finger in the pie."

"That's Mr. Simpson all over. Always poking and prying about. Don't trust him, Mr. Millington."

"I don't intend to, and I'll give you three good reasons

why."

"Well?"

"First, he is as sly as a weasel."

"Yes, he is, Mr. Millington."

"Second, he is as cunning as a fox."

"Yes, he is."

"Third, he resembles a limpet in his sticking qualities."

"Yes, he does," said Rachel, laughing.

"Now, I don't like weasels, or foxes or limpets; and when a gentleman—"

"Oh, no," protested Rachel; "not a gentleman!"

"When an individual, then, combines all the bad qualities of these three creatures in his own person, I like him still less. But at the same time, my dear, I don't tell him so. Rachel, it just occurs to me that you might write me a letter now and then."

"I shall never know what to say!" said Rachel,

"If you have nothing to say, don't write. But something may happen that it would be as well for me to know. There's no telling whether I might not be of assistance in the case of a difficulty."

"Do you mean about Miss Haldane?"

"You've hit it, my dear."
"And Mr. Redwood?"

"You've hit it again, my dear."

"And about the young gentleman—" she paused here, and I took up her words.

"Who's trying to make a fortune over the water?

You've hit it for the third time, my dear."

"I think I understand you," said Rachel, with a

thoughtful look in her bright eyes; "and I will write t

you if there's any occasion.

"It's a bargain," I said, patting her shoulder; "and what more, it's a confidential matter between you and me that we'll keep to ourselves, the only other person I shall admit into our confidence being George. Good-bye, my dear I'll give your love to George. If I had chosen for him, could not have chosen better."

"You are very good, sir," said the grateful girl. "You

and George."

We kissed each other, and I strode to the railway station with a feeling of gladness that my visit to Chud leigh had turned out so well, as regards George and his sweetheart. The prospect in other quarters was not so cheering.

As I anticipated, Simpson was on the platform waiting

for me.

"Couldn't let you go, Millington, without a parting hand-shake," said he.

"It would have been very unfriendly," said I, "if you

hadn't come to see the last of me."

"Not the last of you, I hope," said he.

"Speaking figuratively, Simpson, it's quite on the cards you'll see a good deal more of me."

"Oh, yes, in London."

"Here in Chudleigh, as well. Can you keep a secret?"

"Close as the grave."

"I am thinking of investing in land about here. A few spare thousands—couldn't do better with 'em. Don't blab,

or the prices will run up. Mum's the word."

I put my finger to my lips, jumped into the train, and left him staring at me. Weasel, fox, and limpet as he was, he was rather slow in making up his mind.

# THE SECOND LINK--SUPPLIED BY MR BARLOW, PRIVATE INQUIRY, SURREY STREET, W.C.

## CHAPTER XII.

In the railway carriage I turned my serious attention, for the first time, to the commission I had undertaken for Mr. Haldane, namely, to trace the history of Adeline Ducroz after she and Julius Clifford had separated in Paris; and it was only then that I properly estimated the extreme barrenness of the information he had—grudgingly, as it seemed to me—doled out.

First, the names of the two principal actors in a drama which certainly could not claim the merit of originality.

Second, the name of the steamer in which these actors

made the voyage to New York.

Third, the year, but not the month, of the vessel's

departure and arrival.

Fourth, some vague particulars of the state of affairs when Miss Ducroz and Mr. Clifford met on board the "Circassia," and of the life the couple led in the States and elsewhere.

Nothing more.

Mr. Haldane's method of imparting the story to me did not increase any respect I may have felt for him, nor did it win my confidence. It was a shuffling, evasive, vacillating kind of method which innocent or strong-minded men never employ, and it did not blind me in the least. I even began to question how much of the story was true, and how much of it false, but I soon put a stop to this mental debate, knowing that to commit myself to definite conclusions upon evidence so entirely circumstantial would be likely to mislead me. Long before I reached London I had come to the end of my deliberations, and was dis-satisfied with the result. George saw this dissatisfaction expressed in my face upon my arrival home, but was ignorant of its cause. I asked him about Honoria, but he had nothing to add to the information he had given me in his letter. She had disappeared, that was all he knew; the sitting-room she had occupied was in perfect order, and it really became a doubtful point whether she was in the house in the morning when I took my departure for Chudleigh Park.

"Have you made any inquiries in the neighborhood?"

I asked.

"No," replied George, "I thought it best to do nothing till you came home, unless you telegraphed to the contrary. The paper I found in the room in which she speaks of committing suicide gave me a terrible turn, and I didn't know what to make of it. I should have gone straight to the police if I hadn't been afraid of making things worse, and if I hadn't remembered what you told me of the girl. 'Best leave it to dad,' I thought; 'he'll be sure to do the

right thing."

"I'm not so sure myself," I said "but I'm glad you kept quiet. I don't think there's much fear of Honoria doing any harm to herself. The fit has passed off, and she has a little money in her pocket to help her along; and when that's gone she knows where to come for more. I don't want to lose sight of her if I can help it, but I've an idea that it depends more upon her than upon me whether I set eyes on her again. However, I'm going out to ask a question or two; she can hardly have gone from the neighbor-hood without somebody seeing her."

That was true enough, but I did not succeed in coming across anyone who remembered seeing such a young woman as I described, and at the end of my inquiries I was no wiser than when I began. I returned home and spent a quiet evening, thinking of what was before me, and the longer I thought the more convinced did I become that it would be

folly for me even to commence the task I had undertaken single-handed. In such inquiries certain machinery is necessary which I had not at my command. Where was such machinery to be met with? Where else but in the firm of Barlow & Co., of which I was once a partner. And what more able man could I ask to assist me, to take, indeed, command of the ship, than Mr. Barlow himself? The moment I decided to call him in I felt relieved, and before I went to bed I posted a note to him, asking him to come to see me the following evening at half-past seven for the double purpose of business and pleasure. "It is important business," I wrote, "and there will be a bit of supper at

half-past nine."

My letter posted, George and I stopped up later than usual, and I did not consider it a breach of confidence to tell him something of what had occurred at Chudleigh Park and the Manor House, and what had passed between me and Mr. Haldane. I did not reveal everything; it would not have been prudent; therefore he did not know that "Austin," to whom Honoria had so despairingly written, and Mr. Redwood were one person. He was rather curious about Simpson, whose acquaintance, I said, he would probably have an opportunity of making, as that worthy had promised to pay me a visit when he came to London. Whatever subject we spoke upon took unfailingly one direction, Rachel, and I dare say he dreamt of her when he went to bed. My dreams were of Honoria, who was the most vivid bit of color in the picture which the last two or three days had presented to me.

At ten o'clock the following morning I received a telegram from Mr. Barlow, to the effect that he would be with me at half-past seven in the evening. I may say here that he is a man for whom I have a sincere regard, and that he is what some would consider a "character." He is the most methodical being I have ever met with, and the records he keeps of the cases in which he is engaged are models of precision. They are sometimes more than that; they are literary models—for which he has a special reason. With a conscientious regard for the profession—he insists

upon calling it a "profession"—in which he is engaged, and sternly refusing to have anything to do with disreputable cases, Mr. Barlow is fired with an ambition to become an author, and has confided to me that at some future time, when he has retired, as I have done, from active business, it is his intention, without mentioning names or betraying confidence, to use in a literary way, some of the experiences he has gained in the "profession" he has practised for a great number of years. His discretion may be relied upon, and if he carries out his intentions the interesting result may find a place by-and-bye on the book and railway stalls.

Punctually at half-past seven he made his appearance in Shepherd's Bush, and George, after the first friendly salutations, left us alone, having received the cue from me.

"A fine manly fellow," said Mr. Barlow, looking admiringly after George. "I don't know what I wouldn't give if

I had a son on the same model."

Mr. Barlow is a married man without children, and I have always been sorry for him and his wife, who are just the sort of people who ought to have their house full of youngsters—in respect of which generally it is my opinion there is an unfair division, many having more than they know what to do with, and others who long for them having none at all. That, perhaps, is the reason why they take up with cats and dogs. If communism could be brought to bear upon the matter, some whose quivers are too full and some whose quivers are empty would be eager to join the ranks, and Mr. Barlow and his wife would be among the first recruits.

There was a jug of beer on the table, and pipes and tobacco, and when the pipes were set going we began to talk about the business which had brought us together. I commenced by telling him of George's love affair, and went on to the letter I received from Mr. Haldane, and how it was because I wanted to see George's sweetheart that I went down to Chudleigh Park. I related everything that occurred there, and Mr. Barlow sat and puffed and moistened his lips with the beer, and never interrupted me once. That

was his way; to hear the story right through, and then to take it to pieces. I was altogether different from him; my impatience always got the better of me, and I felt myself forced to interrupt the speaker, with questions and observations. Then again, my features betrayed me, my feelings showing themselves. Mr. Barlow's face was a mask, and you could never guess what was going on inside of him. I was a little disappointed that he could be so impassive with me, and when I had finished all I had to say, I told him so.

"It's habit, Millington," he said, "nothing more; don't worry about it. I drop the professional, and resume the friendly. Here's to you and yours, with my best wishes for George and his sweetheart. I shall expect to be invited to the wedding." He buried his face in the jug, and took a long draught. "And now for a chat. You've told me what has surprised me, though I didn't shew it; before we've done, you'll hear what'll surprise you. It's a queer story all round, and likely to be queerer as it goes on. There are under-currents, Millington; we're only on the surface as yet. Honoria, now. I shouldn't wonder if there's a future before her. You'd be glad to keep track of her."

"I should."

"A fine girl, you say."
"A very handsome girl."

"Without balance."

"She has given proof of that."

"A valuable possession, Millington, balance. People that haven't got it get into scrapes; people that have got it, don't. We'll see what can be done about Honoria in a quiet way. You never heard me prophecy, did you?"

"Never."

"I've rather taken to it lately—to myself. Experience teaches, you know. There's nothing uncommon in the part Honoria plays in the story you've told me."

"Unfortunately, no."

"She comes in by a side door, so to speak—commences with a small part. Wonder, now, whether the character will grow. No, nothing uncommon about her, but something

remarkably uncommon about this Mr. Clifford and Miss Ducroz, and something still more uncommon that we—partners once, friends always—should be engaged in this affair."

"I don't see what you are driving at," I said.

"You'll see soon. Carry your mind back. When you were in the office we did some business for Mr. Haldane."

"I remember we did, but it was entirely in your hands.

I was not acquainted with the particulars."

"Neither was I," said Mr. Barlow. "It originated in letters he had received—threatening letters—and he didn't show them to me. Kept them close, and when I threw out a hint that he should let me read them, took no notice. As well as I could make out, an agent, acting for a client whose name did not transpire, demanded money under threats of exposure about something or other, and Mr. Haldane had made up his mind to pay the money to this agent, to save trouble, he said. He was as mysterious to me in his communications years ago as he was to you only yesterday or the day before. The affair was settled, that is all I know, and the money was handed over. I never pry, Millington, when I find it's not to a client's taste; the responsibility is his, not mine. What I am asked to do, and paid to do, in the way of business, I do if I can, and there's an end of it as far as I am concerned. But would you consider it strange if the affair he entrusted to you a day or two since has anything to do with the affair he entrusted to the firm a good many years ago?"

"I should."

"I shouldn't. The world is full of open graves. I gather from you that the interest you take in the present affair is not purely a professional interest."

"It is not."

"Talking to you," said Mr. Barlow, "is not like talking to a stranger. We're in confidence. What passes in this room is under seal. I said you would hear what would surprise you. Here it is. You are engaged to discover all about Adeline Ducroz after Julius Clifford left her in Paris towards the end of the year 1867. I am engaged to discover all about Julius Clifford from that year to this."

"You are joking," I said, greatly surprised by this

singular disclosure.

"Not at all. The affair was placed in my hands three weeks ago, and I have already made some progress. It is a curious coincidence, and will lead to developments. I have something still more strange to disclose. In this search I have two clients, who appear to be working independently of each other. Let us argue the matter out, and, up to a certain point, join forces. It will save waste of power. What do you say?"
"I say, agreed."

"And I say, agreed. I will be as frank with you as you have been with me, and so that there shall be no confusion I will speak of my clients separately, as client number one and client number two. It is just twenty-two days since client number one introduced himself to me, saying that he had come upon recommendation, having heard a high opinion of me. He wished to place some business in my hands, and after two or three preliminary inquiries—you know how particular I am in the nature of the business I undertake-I saw that there was nothing objectionable in it, and I consented to accept the commission. Some of the particulars given to me tally with some of the particulars given to you. For instance the names of two persons, Mr. Julius Clifford and Miss Adeline Ducroz. Also the name of the steamer in which these two persons travelled to New York—the Circassia. Also, the date of the departure of this ship, my information being more exact than yours, the month being named as well as the year, March, 1867. Also, the circumstance of Mr. Clifford and Miss Ducroz-I will keep those names for the sake of clearness—living together in New York as man and wife. Also, their return to England, and their being together in Paris. Also, the circumstance of Mr. Clifford leaving the lady in Paris, and returning, presumably, to England, concerning which place of return my instructions are not precise. So far, the bare bones of the case presented to you and presented to me. In other important respects, upon which my information is much fuller than yours, there are serious and important

discrepancies, of which you shall presently judge. No instructions were given to me to trace Miss Ducroz, my mission being to trace Mr. Clifford; by which I infer that my client knows where the lady is to be found, as your client, I presume knows where the gentleman is to be found. You agree with me upon this last point."

"Certainly."

"Now mark. Client number one does not inform me what he intends to do when he knows where to lay hands on Mr. Clifford. All he says is, 'Discover him, and tell me where he is to be found,' and no further instructions are given to me at present."

"Have you succeeded in discovering Mr. Clifford?" I

asked.

"Up to the hour I closed my office to-day I have not succeeded in discovering him. For the present I dismiss client number one, and come to client number two. This day week he sent in his card, and was shown into my private room. 'Mr. Barlow,' he said. 'I am Mr. Barlow,' I answered. 'I wished to see you personally because I prefer to do with principals,' said he. 'I want you to ascertain for me all that it is possible to ascertain of a lady and a gentleman from about the year 1867'—mark the year, Millington—'to the present day. Will that be difficult?' 'It depends,' I said, 'upon circumstances. 1867 is a long way back. You must give me a starting point.' 'I will tell you as much as I know myself,' said he, 'and perhaps you will say it is very little. But the greater the trouble the greater the charge. I suppose. 'That is the case,' I said, 'and I should require a sum in hand for preliminary expenses.'
'You can have anything in reason,' he said, and I fancied he looked down on me rather. This fancy getting into my head I was half inclined to decline the commission there and then, but I thought it would look unprofessional, and that I would carry it a little further before I refused it. 'The names of the parties?' I asked. Imagine my surprise when he answered, 'Mr. Clifford—I am not sure about the first name—and Miss Ducroz—I am not sure about hers.' 'Any more particulars?' I required. He consulted a paper,

and said, 'Some time during that year they had rooms in Norfolk street, Strand; and sometime during that year they went to America in a steamer called the Circassia. That is about the extent of my knowledge." 'You can leave the matter with me,' I said, 'and I will see what can be done.' That was all that passed between us, except that he put twenty pounds in bank notes on the table before he went away, and that I said that if any of the money was spent I would give him an account of it, and that if nothing was done he should have the twenty pounds back. Now, Millington, what do you think is the name of client number two?"

"How is it possible for me to guess?" I said.

"Considering you know the gentleman," replied Mr. Barlow, "it is quite possible. His card bears the name of Mr. Louis Redwood, Honoria's friend."

## CHAPTER XIII.

This was strange news indeed. What did all this hunting down mean, each huntsman, without the other's knowledge, after the same quarry? I could find no words to express my astonishment, and I gazed in silence at the shrewd face of Mr. Barlow.

Presently he spoke. "I have not made up my mind what I shall do about Mr. Redwood's commission, but I shall probably throw it up in the course of this week. You have let in light upon his character, and I don't care to work for scoundrels. He means mischief, depend upon it."

"To whom?"

"To Mr. Clifford," replied Mr. Barlow, with a meaning glance at me, "and to Miss Ducroz as well, most likely. It is a lively tangle, with more than one black sheep in it. Mr. Haldane has given you one version of the story of Mr. Clifford and Miss Ducroz; I will give you another. Fill your pipe, and settle yourself comfortably; it will take a little time to tell properly.

Before I proceed to narrate what Mr. Barlow imparted to me, I must remind my readers of his literary proclivities. With a view to future reputation as an author he cultivates a style of his own, and whenever he gets the chance of putting the pieces of a puzzle together, and of weaving a story out of them, he makes the most of his opportunities in the way of embellishments. I must do him the justice to say that he always keeps to the main facts; he does not introduce imaginative matter, and any adornment he uses is used on the right side. He is ingenious, but his ingenuity is kept within bounds by his common sense and his knowledge of human character. With these preliminary

remarks I will let him speak for himself.

"Some twenty years ago there lived, down Oxford way, a married couple of the name of Kennedy. What their actual circumstances were I cannot say, but they lived in fair style, and were held in good repute. Mr. Kennedy was an easy-going gentleman, and his wife an amiable, kind-hearted, and charitable lady. They had no children of their own, but had adopted a child, the orphan daughter of a distant relative. The name of this girl was Adeline Ducroz, who, at the time I am speaking of, was somewhat over twenty years of age. She was a high-spirited young lady, fond of gaiety and pleasure, and rather difficult to control, and this, perhaps, was the reason why, when she grew to womanhood, she did not get along as well as she might with the good people who had brought her up. Although Mrs. Kennedy had strict ideas as to propriety of conduct she had not sufficient strength of character to exercise proper control over a young, impressionable, and excitable nature. Nothing serious, however, occurred between them until the appearance upon the scene of a gentleman whose acquaintance Miss Ducroz had accidentally made outside the family circle. to the manner in which this acquaintanceship was formed there is some ambiguity, but none whatever in his prosecution of the intimacy. He and Miss Ducroz met frequently, but he did not come to Mr. Kennedy's house, and this in itself was enough to throw doubt upon the

honesty of his intentions. A little while after this was discovered Mrs. Kennedy remonstrated with Adeline, and made remarks upon the impropriety of clandestine meetings which the young lady resented. There are other features in the intimacy which alarmed the Kennedys. The gentleman was considerably older than Adeline, he was a stranger in the neighborhood, and Adeline refused to dis-close his name. When she was asked the reason for this concealment, she answered that it was his wish his name should not be revealed, at least for a time. It was evident that she was acting under his instructions, and that he had obtained a certain mastery over her. Mr. Kennedy might have sought him out for the purpose of forcing an explanation from him, but it unfortunately happened at this period that his entire attention was claimed by the state of his worldly affairs. Speculations into which he had entered had turned out disastrously, and after satisfying the demands made upon him he found himself almost beggared. He was compelled to give up his home in Oxford, and, pending arrangements he was endeavoring to make for a new home and a fresh start in life, he came to London with his wife and adopted daughter, and took lodgings in Brixton. This might have proved a blessing to the young lady had it caused a break in her intimacy with her gentleman friend, but no such break occurred. Within a few days of their arrival in London he made his appearance again, and he and Adeline continued to meet. Again did Mrs. Kennedy remonstrate, to as little purpose as before. 'If he is courting you honestly,' said Mrs. Kennedy, 'let him come here to our home and yours." It was of no avail; Adeline's lover did not present himself, and things went on in this miserable way until Mr. Kennedy's arrangements were completed for a fresh start. When Adeline was told that the new home was to be established in America, in one of the Western States, she was dumfounded. 'I cannot go,' she cried. 'I will not go!'"

"I must make a break here," said Mr. Barlow; "candidly, I must make a break, to say a few words on my own account. I don't expect you to believe, Millington,

that everything I put into the mouths of the characters who play their parts in this drama of real life is exactly what was said by them, but without some such conjectural remarks and some such conjectural dialogue the drama would be incomplete. I am simply doing what is done in a trial built up on circumstantial evidence. I am doing what the lawyers do in these cases, building up my case. I do not pretend that Adeline said, 'I cannot go; I will not go;' but the words, in their effect, are as near as you can get (no reporter being present to take them down) when she said she would not go to America with Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy, and in my opinion they portray the scene faithfully. Nor do I pretend to state exactly what passed between her and Mr. Clifford. You will hear something more of these interviews before I have finished. In such a case as this, and in such a story as I am telling, from instructions and information I have received, we must be guided by our common sense. It is a fact that at first Adeline did refuse to to go, and it is a fact that during the three weeks that elapsed between the day that the Kennedys announced that they were going to America and the day they embarked on board the Circassia, Mr. Clifford made himself scarcein plainer terms, that he and Adeline had no further clandestine meetings. Whether he had made proposals to Adeline to which she would not consent, or whether he was tired of his pursuit of her, I will not now state, but it is undeniably true that he was following the young lady with base intentions, and that she, believing in the honorable professions which such men make in such adventures, did not see through him until the hour arrived when he made plain proposals from which she shrank. You perceive, therefore, that I believe that, up to this time, Adeline was a virtuous girl-weak, of course, but still virtuous. For it was on the evening of this very day that she said to Mrs. Kennedy, after coming from a meeting with her lover, that she hoped they would forgive her, and that she would go with them to the new home across the seas. So a peace was patched up, and preparations made for departure, during which my gentleman did not put in an appearance.

"Their astonishment, therefore," continued Mr. Barlow, was all the greater when they saw him on board the Circassia as the vessel was steaming out of the Mersey. Mrs. Kennedy knew who it was by the heightened color in Adeline's face, and by the look of joy which flashed into her eyes when they fell upon him. There was sadness in Mrs Kennedy's eyes, and her face paled, as she realized the situation. 'Introduce us,' she said to Adeline, and the young lady went and spoke to him, and came back, saying that he would rather not be introduced, as she had thrown doubts upon his honor. That was rather a lofty way of putting it, and rather a mean way, too, of getting out of a difficulty; and, of course, Mrs. Kennedy could not ask a second time for an introduction. She could find out his name, however, through the passenger list, and she did. It was Mr. Julius Clifford. So here we have them in company on board the Circassia, Mr. Julius Clifford and Miss Adeline Ducroz.

"They were very much together during that voyage. Mrs. Kennedy, being a bad sailor, could not keep a watchful eye on them, but she heard it from the other passengers, and Adeline's blithe spirits showed that she was happy and again under his influence. The debatable question now with Mr. and Mrs. Kennedy was whether Adeline would go with them to the West. They asked her, and she said, without hesitation, 'Where else should I go?' Where else, indeed! 'And your friend, Mr. Clifford?' asked Mrs. Kennedy. 'He has some business in New York,' answered Adeline, 'which will detain him a week or two, and then he is coming on to us.' All false, as was proved; he had anticipated the questions, and had directed her how to answer them. Believing she spoke the truth the Kennedys were put off their guard, which was just what Mr. Clifford wanted, and when they arrived in New York neither he nor Adeline was to be found. The Kennedys were deeply grieved, but they were powerless; Adeline was not their daughter, she was over age, and her own mistress; they had not the slightest authority over her. It had been their intention to remain in New York only one night, and

to start the following day for the West; but they remained a week, hunting for the misguided girl. I don't know what good they expected to do when they found her, but they had a duty to perform, and they performed it. They had almost given her up in despair when they met her and Mr. Clifford in Central Park. Mr. Clifford would have hurried Adeline away, but Mrs. Kennedy stood in their path. 'What is your pleasure?' asked Mr. Clifford 'Let me speak to you, Adeline,' said Mrs. Kennedy. 'Speak then,' said Mr. Clifford. 'Adeline and I have no secrets from each other.' Mrs. Kennedy wished to ask Adeline if she was married, but she did not dare to put the question in the presence of Mr. Clifford; it would have been an open insult. She asked, therefore, instead, 'Are you happy, Adeline?' 'Are you happy Adeline?' repeated Mr. Clifford. 'Quite happy,' replied Adeline, and indeed she looked as if she was. 'Quite happy,' repeated Mr. Clifford. 'I hope you are satisfied. Come, Adeline.' 'One moment,' said poor Mrs. Kennedy. 'Are you going to live in America?' 'Our movements,' said Mr. Clifford, with his eyes on Adeline's face, 'are uncertain.' And such was his power over her that she repeated his words as he had repeated Mrs. Kennedy's. 'Our movements,' she said, 'are uncertain.' Though I have little doubt that a moment before she did not know whether they were so or not. 'You have our address,' said Mrs. Kennedy. 'We shall be glad to see you at any time.' 'Much obliged,' drawled Mr. Clifford. 'And if ever you want a friend,' said Mrs. Kennedy, 'you will always find one in us.' 'She will never want one,' said Mr. Clifford, 'not in the way you mean.' 'I trust not, I trust not,' murmured Mrs. Kennedy. Then she held out her hand, and Adeline took it and pressed it warmly. Perhaps at that moment the recollection of all that Mrs. Kennedy had done for her came to her mind. She offered her hand also to Mr. Clifford, and he, after a little hesitation, accepted it; and so they would have parted, but when Mrs. Kennedy turned and walked away a few steps, Adeline ran after her and kissed her, with tears running

down her face and then ran back to Mr. Clifford. Bitterly did Mrs. Kennedy reproach herself afterwards for her want of courage in not asking Adeline if she was married; had the answer been what it should have been she would have left Adeline with a lighter heart. Had it been what it should not have been, she might have made some effort to save her, even at that late day. As it was she left her adopted daughter, beset with sad doubts. I think I see in your face, Millington, that you want to say something."

"I do," I said. "When Mr. Haldane told me that Mr.

"I do," I said. "When Mr. Haldane told me that Mr. Clifford and Miss Ducroz lived together in New York, she bearing his name with his cognizance and consent, and making purchases in his name for which he paid, I told him it was as good as a marriage, though no ceremony was

performed."

"Is that the law?"

"It is the law in the State of New York," I replied.

"Ah; and what did Mr. Haldane reply?"

"That Mr. Clifford had already heard some nonsense to that effect."

"Some nonsense to that effect," repeated Mr. Barlow. "Denoting that he did not believe anything of the kind."

"That was what he intended to convey."

"We will prolong this interruption. Millington, I take it that you are satisfied that the account Mr. Haldane gave you of the first meeting between Mr. Clifford and Miss Ducroz on board the Circassia is false."

" Most certainly."

"It follows, then, that some other things he related to you are false."

"Yes, I should say so."

"He is a fool," said Mr. Barlow, "and something worse than a fool. You asked me, when I commenced my story, whether I had succeeded in discovering Mr. Clifford. I answered that up to the hour of closing my office to-day I had not discovered him. I should give you a different answer now."

"Should you?"

"Yes, and here is my reason. It is my deliberate

opinion that Mr. Julius Clifford is no other than Mr. Hal dane himself."

## CHAPTER XIV.

MR. BARLOW had put in plain words a suspicion which had crossed my mind. He was not a man who was wise after the event, and I did not question the conclusion at which

he had so promptly arrived.

"We have to consider," he continued, "what induces a client to so stupidly deceive the agent he employs. The kind of a man who acts in this way is either a man of weak character or a man so eaten up with pride and conceit that he cannot admit, even to an utter stranger, that he has done anything of which he ought to feel ashamed. But pride very often has a fall, and your man of weak character more often than not finds that he is in the wrong box, with the key turned upon him. The story Mr. Haldane related to you paints Adeline Ducroz black, and himself white; proclaims her an adventuress, and himself an honorable man. Now, my belief is that he and his friend Mr. Redwood are birds of a feather, with this difference—that Mr. Haldane has sown his wild oats, and Mr. Redwood is still sowing. It is reaping time with Mr. Haldane. Somebody has threatened him; he is frightened of the past; there are skeletons, not in his cupboards, but standing at his door. So he calls you in, and while he is explaining what he wants done, lies to you, to prove, in case you suspect him, that he is a saint, and the woman he has wronged is a sinner. We will put him aside awhile, and go on with my version of the story. After this last meeting with Miss Ducroz in New York, Mrs. Kennedy went to her home in the West, where she remained for several years. And now there is introduced into the case evidence of a very significant nature, the first portion of which is in the form of letters written by Miss Ducroz to Mrs. Kennedy, These letters, with others not so clear, were preserved by Mrs. Kennedy,

and are in my possession. As it happens I have them in my pocket, and can read them to you. They bear neither date nor address, but the stamps and postmarks on the envelopes indicate the cities in which they were written. Here is the first:—

"'My dear Mother,—I am writing to you without my husband's knowledge'—

"You will understand before I have finished," said Mr. Barlow, breaking off and looking up from the faded letter he was reading, "why, although she speaks here of Mr. Clifford as her husband, I have spoken of her all through

as Miss Ducroz." He then resumed:

""Without my husband's knowledge, and when we meet, which I hope we shall soon, please do not tell him that I ever wrote to you. Mr. Clifford is very kind to me, and very affectionate, but he is also very particular, and he would be angry with me if he found out that I did anything in opposition to his wishes. He is not always right, but that is no reason why I should say so to his face. On the day we met in Central Park he said, after you were gone, "There is no occasion, my dear Adeline, for you to keep up a correspondence with Mrs. Kennedy. By and by, when we visit them, she will get to know me better, and will do me justice." I did not promise not to write to you, so I am not exactly disobeying him, and I do not want you to reply to my letters, for I shall write to you again if I have time. My husband need not know about it. It has weighed on my mind that I have been ungrateful for all you have done for me, and I ask you now to forgive me. I cannot say anything more than that I am very, very sorry. If the past were to come over again I might act differently, but this confession does not make me any better, and is a bad excuse for not doing what is right. My reliance is upon your good heart and your feelings for me. It is a relief for me to write to you, and I feel happier already. My husband and I go out nearly every evening to theatres and other places of amusement, but during the day he leaves me alone sometimes to attend to his business affairs, and it is at these times, having nothing to do, that

I feel lonely and long for someone to speak to. How I wish you were living near us! I hope you are happy and comfortable in your new home. With love to you and my dear father, I am, ever your affectionate daughter, "ADELINE."

"There is not much in this letter," said Mr. Barlow, "except that it shows a craving for sympathy, and a fear of Mr. Clifford. In one sense it was a great satisfaction to Mrs. Kennedy; the writer spoke of Mr. Clifford as her husband. The second letter, which I shall now read, was written some weeks after the first, judging from the postmark on the envelope:

"'My dear Mother,—I have news for you which you will be sorry to hear. We are going to Europe. It is quite sudden, and I only knew it yesterday. I have been looking forward so to coming and staying with you a little while, and now, at the last moment, I am disappointed. I told my husband how much I felt in leaving America without seeing you, and he says it cannot be helped. Our vessel starts to-morrow morning, and I have all my packing to do, so I have very little time for writing; but I could not go without sending you a line. It is a good thing I have not to run about, saying good-bye to people; we have made no friends since we have been here, and the only people I know are tradesmen. I shall write to you soon again—perhaps from the ship, perhaps from London. I think we are going there, but Mr. Clifford does not seem to have made up his mind where we shall live; he talks of travelling; if I had my way, I should like to be settled first and to travel afterwards. Good-bye. God bless you both. Your affectionate daughter,

'ADELINE.'

"There is not much in this letter, either," observed Mr. Barlow, "unless you read between the lines. She does not speak of Mr. Clifford's kindness and it proves that she has no friends. It proves, also, the complete ascendancy Mr.

Clifford has over her. His will is law. To a mild remonstrance against the sudden departure of which she is informed only at the last moment, and which is to tear her from the only true friends she has in the world, he simply replies that it cannot be helped. No other explanation, although his preparations for leaving the country must have taken him some time to make. He does not confide in her; he keeps her in comparative seclusion; he issues commands which she has to obey. She has not the courage to resist; therefore she fears him. The romance is fading, and she is being brought face to face with reality. Her next letter bears the London postmark:

"'My dear Mother,—We have been in London three weeks, and I would have written to you before if I had not been ill. We had a dreadful passage, and I was not able to go on deck for a single hour. I was in bed from the first day to the last, and I feared I should never rise from it. I sometimes think it would have been better for me if I had died at sea; all my trouble would have been over. It is wicked to have such thoughts, I know, but I cannot help it. I have nothing in the way of news that I dare tell you; it is only that I feel I must write to you. Mr. Clifford's plans are not settled yet, and I believe we are to start for Paris to-morrow. I do hope you are happy and prosperous. I will write again if I live. Your loving daughter.

ADELINE.'

"The letter speaks for itself," said Mr. Barlow. "It is a confession of misery, and there seems to be no prospect of brighter days to come. She says she has no news that she dare tell—there is something significant in that. She does not speak of her 'husband' now, but calls him Mr. Clifford. The last intelligible letter is written in Paris:

"'How shall I write to you—what shall I say? We are here in Paris; they call it "the gay city." To me it is a city of darkness. I think I must be going mad. Bitterly am I punished for not listening to your advice—too bitter-

ly, for surely my fault did not deserve a punishment so great. I am cut off from all the world, and the only being at whose feet I would kneel for pardon, if I had the courage, is far away. Were I able to come to you, I should not dare; I should fly from you in terror and shame, and you would repulse me, as every good woman would if she knew the truth about me. Can you guesscan you guess? You are not bad, like me; your heart is pure; you have not sinned. But is the sin all mine? Am I alone responsible? I wander in darkness; I cannot pray. The present terrifies me, and I shudder at the future. And yet there are women who in my condition, would look forward with joy to the day when—But those women are not ashamed to look their sisters in the face; they have the right to hold up their heads; they are not disgraced as I am. Can you guess now? I would seek death if I dared, but I am too great a coward. My only solace is forgetfulness, oblivion, and I seek it shamefully. Disgrace upon disgrace. I am glad you cannot write to me, that you do not know where to find me. But do not quite forget me. Think of me, not as I am, but as I might have been if I had been grateful for all your goodness to me, if I had shown you obedience.—Your unhappy ADELINE."

"So far," said Mr. Barlow, "these four letters tell a plain story, and upon the receipt of the last, Mrs. Kennedy, stirred by indignation and compassion, came to Europe in search of Adeline. Her husband would have come in her place, but to leave the new home he was establishing would have been utter ruin to his prospects, so he yielded to his wife's solicitations, and allowed her to undertake a duty which they both recognised and acknowledged. She had very little money to proscute her inquiries, and as might have been expected in consequence of that, and with clues so slight to guide her, she was quite unsuccessful. Not the slightest trace of Adeline could she find, and she was compelled to return to America no wiser than when she came. Meanwhile "—Mr. Barlow paused as we heard the street door open and shut—"Meanwhile," he continued, "here is

George come home, hungry for supper, and I feel peckish myself. Pop in at the office to-morrow afternoon at four o'clock, and you will hear some still more startling developments. Well, George "—as my lad entered the room—"what sort of a night is it?"

George answered that it was a fine night, and then our little maid appeared and set supper for us, which we enjoyed thoroughly, not a word being spoken about the business which had brought us together. But as I walked with Mr.

Barlow down the street to catch a 'bus, he said:

"You have spoken of a daughter of Mr. Haldane's as if

you liked her?"

"No one could help liking her," I said. "She is a lump of sweetness and goodness."

"That sounds well. Young?"

"About eighteen, I should say."

"About eighteen," said Mr. Barlow, and appeared to be reckoning up something in his mind. "By the way, are there any more children?"

"Not that I am aware of. I should say decidedly not, or we should have heard of them through George's sweet-

heart."

"Only one child, then, a young lady about eighteen years of age. That opens up a new road."

"What is in your mind, Barlow?"

"Something that may be in yours when you hear the whole of the story. Mr. Haldane a widower?"

"I never inquired."

"No signs of a wife at the Hall?"

"None."

"Nor talk of the young lady's mother?"

"None."

"Here's my 'bus. Good night. Don't be late to-morrow, Millington. Four o'clock—a little earlier if you like."

## CHAPTER XV.

So KEEN was my interest in the unfinished story he had related, and so eager was I to hear the conclusion, that I presented myself at the old office in Surrey street at half-

past three.

"I fancied you would be early," said Mr. Barlow. "Looks like old times having you here again. The business of the office is over for the day, and we shall not be disturbed. Before I go on with my story I have to give you a piece of information and to make a confession. The information is that I have thrown up the commission, so far as Mr. Louis Redwood is concerned. I wrote a letter to him this morning, enclosing the twenty pounds he left with me, and saying that I could not attend to his business. He will be wild at my refusal, and, as a gentleman who thinks no small beer of himself, will send me an impudent letter in reply. I'll put up with that."

"I'm glad you've thrown him over," I said. "It isn't only that it wouldn't be exactly the correct thing to work one client against another, in a manner of speaking, but Mr. Redwood is an infernal scoundrel, and I'd rather hinder

than help him in any of his schemes."

"He'll have no difficulty in getting somebody else to take up the affair," said Mr. Barlow, "but we hold what threads there are, and it will be a hard job to work without them. My confession is soon made. I have spoken of client number one, for whom I am really working as a gentleman. I oughtn't to have misled you; client number one is a lady."

I nodded. It did not seem to me to be important, and it was a mistake in a personal pronoun any one might have made. During a short silence that ensued Mr. Barlow occupied himself in arranging a number of papers which he intended to read or refer to. They were torn scraps, some of them, many written upon pieces of paper picked up apparently at hap-hazard, and pen and pencil appeared

to have been indiscriminately used. Among them were several sheets of letter and note paper, soiled and creased; part of the writing was large, part very small and fine; and the whole collection was evidently the work of a person or persons who did not have proper writing material always at command. The various pieces and sheets of paper were numbered in red ink, and this sign of order, I judged, was the work of Mr. Barlow.

"I saw client number one this morning," he said, "and told her that I was disclosing the particulars of the story to a friend who might be useful to me in the inquiry. Her answer was that I could do exactly as I pleased, and that I could manage the affair in any way that suggested itself to me. All that she asks at present is that I shall track Mr. Clifford, if he is alive, and let her know where he is to be found. There is something of perhaps more importance than the discovery of Mr. Clifford hanging to the matter, and both my client and I are thinking of it, though we have not spoken plainly about it. We shall presently, I dare say, but to find Mr. Clifford is the first step. Now, Millington, I put it to you straight. Shall we continue to act as partners in this job, or shall we work independently of each other?"

"Continue to act together," I replied.

"I can't see anything wrong in the partnership," said Mr. Barlow, thoughtfully. "Since we parted last night I have been seriously considering it, and looking at it from all sides. You have already learned something from me that may assist you, and you will presently learn a great deal more; and I, as I believe, have already learned something from you that may assist me. The difference is this: that what you have gained has been gained directly, from what I have told you; and that what I have gained has been gained indirectly, from what you have told me. My version of the story is the true one; yours the false. You will be able to go to Mr. Haldane, if you care to do so—for the option, I take it, will be yours—and say, 'I can now tell you something of the history of Adeline Ducroz after the separation in Paris between her and Mr. Julius

Clifford.' I may be able to go to my client and inform her where Mr. Clifford is to be found. Each of us, then, will have executed his commission, and what consequences may follow, and what further commissions may be offered to us, are not, at present, matters for our consideration. This being understood, I will go on from where I

left off last night.

"After her unsuccessful search for Adeline in London and Paris Mrs. Kennedy returned to America. During her absence some communications from the unfortunateyoung woman had been received by Mr. Kennedy, and after her return other communications reached them from time to time. These communications cannot be described as letters, for, except upon the envelopes, they are not addressed by name, nor do they bear any signature; but they are indubitably in Adeline's handwriting, although the character of that writing is strangely altered. It is a wonder how some of these communications reached their destricts, tination, so imperfectly were they addressed, and there is more than a reasonable likelihood that some must have miscarried. The papers you see on the table here are the communications of which I am speaking; they were handed to me by my client, and it has taken a great deal of labor to arrange and decipher them. In places they were almost illegible, and, where I could, I have written in the words which were most likely used, or intended to be used. The chronological arrangement was difficult, but I think I have managed it fairly well. With this explanation I will make a start.

## CHAPTER XVI.

<sup>&</sup>quot;" The doctor has been here. He tells me I have been very ill, and that I must take care of myself. I know I have been ill, but what is the use of taking care of myself? I ask this question of the doctor. He says it is a duty. ""Duty!" I cry. "To whom?"

"" To yourself," he answers. "To others."

"'I keep on repeating these words in my mind, over and over again. "It is a duty," I say "to myself, to others."
The doctor, all the time, standing and looking down upon me.

"' "But I do not care for myself," I say presently.

"' "Then do not consider yourself," he answers; "consider others."

"'I repeat the last two words over and over again in my mind. "Consider others—consider others—consider others."

"" Who are the others, doctor?" I ask.

"' First, the living," he answers, speaking very slowly. He speaks so in compliance with my request; when people speak quickly to me now I cannot understand them, I get confused. Even as it is, I often have to repeat what they say, to make sure.

"" First, the living," I say. "Give the living a name."

"" He has one," says the doctor. "Your friend."
""Have I a friend," I ask, "here in this black land?"
""You have," he answers. "Clear your mind of disordered fancies. The land is not black; it is the brightest in the world. You are a lady of good education and natural intelligence, give your abilities fair play."

"" Never mind the land," I say, "never mind my

education and intelligence. Name my living friend."

""Mr. Clifford," he says. "Surely you do not forget!"

""O, Mr. Clifford," I say, "No, I do not forget. How can I forget, doctor, with such abilities and intelligence as mine?"

"" That is much better," says the doctor. "Keep it always before you that you have intelligence and abilities, and that you mean to exercise them—they are the gifts of God, remember—and then you will not forget."

"" I will try as hard as I can, doctor," I say, "not to

forget."

"" Now I have hopes of you," he says, "and shall leave

you till the evening."

'But I call to him not to go yet; that there is some-

thing forgotten. He puts down his hat and stick, and inquires what it is.

"" You spoke of a duty to others," I say.

"" Yes," he answers.

"" And then you said, 'First the living,' and you gave him a name."

"" Perfectly correct," he says. "Your mind is getting

clearer."

""That is not all," I say, "Mr. Clifford is only one, and you spoke of others. Who follows the living Clifford?"

"'He hesitates a moment before he speaks.

"" You will soon hold to your breast a gift from God."

"'I control the anguish that is about to overpower me; I can be strong even now sometimes with a strength born of black bitterness.

"" Another of God's gifts!" I cry. "I am truly blest

How grateful I ought to be!"

"" You are truly blessed," he says, with gentle voice and mocking eyes; I can fathom hidden meanings. "You will be grateful?"

"'I turn from him; I cannot bear to look at his face,

seemingly so kind. He is at the door.

"" Come back!" I cry.

"'He comes at once, and says, "Well?"

""You said just now I was a lady. Why do you mock me?"

""I do not mock you," he says. "Heaven forbid I

should mock you!"

""Do not speak so much of heaven and gifts of God," I say. "You know I am not a lady. You know I am a shameless woman?"

"'He sits by my side; he takes my hand; he preaches a sermon upon the ways of life; he makes light of sin; he says these things are common, and that I must not take it so much to heart. I tear my hand from him.

"" Go?" I cry. "Leave me before I do you a mischief!"

"'He is gone and I am alone. I will not think of what he says—I will not, I will not! All that I will

endeavor to do is to forget. I know what will deaden my senses, what will help me to forget.'

"'There was a conversation in my room; they thought I was asleep. I lay still, deceiving them; they spoke in low tones, but I heard every word.
""Is she any better?" It was Clifford who spoke.

""She is no better, and no worse." The doctor was speaking. "She loses control of herself."

"" Will she die?"

"" It is impossible to say. Life and death are more in her hands than mine."

""The usual cant is that life and death are in God's

hands."

""I do not employ the usual cant. I am guided by

material facts, by common sense."

"'They spoke in French; thanks to my education I understand the language, and German as well. Would it have been better for me if I had been a gutter child? I am a gutter woman; I have made myself one. Who can say mine has been an idle life?

"" If she dies there will be an inquest?" Clifford

again.

"" It cannot be avoided."

"" And I shall have to give evidence?"

"" You will be questioned."

"" My name will be dragged in?"

"'The doctor does not answer. My eyes are closed, but I can see him shrug his shoulders. Clifford's name will be dragged in—his name, that he is always prating about! His name—his honor! "I will not be disgraced! You shall not disgrace me!" How many times has he said that to me? I shall not disgrace him! Has he not disgraced me? But what does that matter? I am only a woman. He is a gentleman. He has said it to me a hundred times. "I am a gentleman; remember that!" Yes, he is a gentleman. He has behaved to me like one. And if I die, and he is questioned, as the doctor warns him he will be, some doubt may be thrown upon the title he claims.

That is his fear. He thinks ever of himself, never of me. How long ago is it, when I was living in the happy home with which I was not contented, that a young girl in our neighborhood was as I am now? She came back with her load of shame. She was spurned—flouted at; in the end she disappeared, no one knew where. And the gentleman who had dragged her down walked about with a smiling face. No one reproached him, no one. He was received in society; mothers allowed him to associate with their daughters; he spoke at public meetings; he was honored, respected. And she! poor Mary Sternhold—where was that lost spirit wandering? What was her end? What will be mine?

"'The conversation between Clifford and the doctor

went on.

"'Said the doctor, "You wish her to live?"

"" Of course I wish her to live," said Clifford. "Do you think I have no heart?"

"'That was a plain question. The doctor did not answer

it. Why did not Clifford ask me?

""Do everything in your power," said Clifford. "She takes too gloomy a view of her situation. I will see that she is comfortably provided for. She would be happy if it was not for her vile temper."

""She is young enough for happiness," said the doctor.
""If all girls were like her," said Clifford, "it would

be unbearable. You know what life is."
""Yes," said the doctor, "I know."

"'His voice was quite callous, and yet his nature is not unkind. It was man of the world speaking to man of the world. Could they have put their experiences side by side, and compared them agreeably? I dare say. Since I left my home I have learned much. Bitter knowledge—bitter experience! My punishment is just; but should not the man be punished as well as the woman?

"" You can do something," said the doctor, "towards helping her to a healthier frame of mind. Treat her with great gentleness; humor her; sympathize with her; win

her back to cheerfulness. Are her parents living?"

""She is an orphan."

"'True. The good souls who call me their daughter are not my parents. They adopted me as their child, and reared and educated me, not out of charity, but out of pure goodness of heart. How have I repaid them?

"" Has she only you to depend upon?" asked the

doctor.

"" I suppose so," replied Clifford, fretfully.

"'It hurt him to acknowledge it.

"" Follow my advice," said the doctor, "and all will be well. They suffer more or less when the parting comes, if the separation is not of their own seeking. Which sometimes happens."

"" I wish it would happen with her," said Clifford;
but she has no independence of spirit. If I were a woman
I would not be tied to a man who wanted to get rid of

me!"

"'There he spoke his mind, thinking I did not hear. He had not said it so plainly to my face, but I knew it all the time.

"" As she does not choose to leave you of her own accord," said the doctor, "you have a certain responsi-

bility."

"" I cannot do more than offer to provide for her," said Clifford, and his voice got savage. "If she knows what's good for her she will consent to what I propose. What

more can a woman want?"

"What more? Love, faithfulness, truth, honor. Clifford looks upon woman as a piece of merchandise, to be bought and sold. I know now sufficient of the world to know that this traffic is pursued in the open market, but then both buyer and seller bargain with their eyes open. Does Clifford dare to think that I belong to the shameless crowd? If he does, why did he swear to me that I should be his wife; why did he make me believe that I was his wife? And now, now, he tells me that he lied to me, that he deliberately deceived me! What does such a man deserve?

"'The doctor went away; Clifford and I were left

alone. He came to my bedside; I did not open my eyes, but I saw him gazing at me. The silence was terrible; I could not bear it.

"" Who is there?" I murmured, pretending that I had

just awoke.

"" It is I, Clifford," he answered.

"'" Have you been here long?" I asked.
"'" I have this moment come in," he said.

"'Even in such a simple matter as this he could not speak the truth. He inquired if I was any better, and I said yes, lying to him as he lied to me.

"" Shall we talk sensibly together?"
"" Say what you please," I answered.

"" I must leave Paris," he said. "Important business calls me away."

"" Very well, Clifford. I will go with you."
"" You are not strong enough."

"" I am quite strong enough. Do we leave to-morrow?"

"" You cannot accompany me. I will arrange so that you shall be comfortable. There, there! Don't make things worse than they are."

""Do you think they can be worse?"

"' Are you going to be unreasonable again?"

""I have never been unreasonable. I am a human being like yourself. You vowed and swore to me\_\_\_\_"

"He interrupted me with, "No more of your whining. I'm sick of it. You will drive me away in anger. What

will you do then?"

"" What will I do then?" I cried. "Publish your treachery to the world! Make your name, that you're so proud of, a bye-word! Drag you down to the level to which you've dragged me!"

"" You will?" he exclaimed, with white face and set

teeth.

"" I will!"

"'He dashed out of the room, leaving me alone with my despair. It is at these times that I seek oblivion. Solitude is awful to me, and he knows it. I crept out of bed, and sought my solace. I drank glass after glass. I

laughed, I sang, I tried to dance, and then I fell to the

ground and forgot everything.

"'If ever you receive this, you whom I called mother once, but dare not call so now, pity and forgive me. You will shudder at my words, but I have imposed it on myself as a penance to write what comes to me to write, though it shows the blackness of my soul. And I shall find a way to send it to you, however strict is the watch they set upon me. I shall disguise nothing that I can remember; I shall write nothing that I believe is false; I shall not seek to excuse myself, nor to make the degradation into which I have fallen less than it is. This is the punishment I shall inflict upon myself.

"'I think I should have been a better woman if I had not been so deceived, but it is only a thought, and perhaps I am deluding myself. I could never have been as you are; your soul is white, mine is not; but I should never have been what I am now, what I have been driven to by Clifford. I have seen good women with children about them, women who have never been led into sin with honeyed words by smiling men, and I might have been worthy to

walk by their side had I not met with Clifford.

"'I have not told you before; I will tell you now.
"'Long before we started for America he wanted me to leave you, but I refused, though I loved him with all my leave you, but I refused, though I loved him with all my soul. "Why do you refuse," he asked, "if you love me as you say you do?" "It is right," I replied, "that I should be married from my mother's house." "I do not like your people," he said, "and they do not like me. What can it matter where we are married?" I gave in so far, and asked when we should be married. "Bye and bye," he answered. "But when?" I urged. "Bye and bye," he answered again. "Leave all to me. Make your preparations, and we will go away and be happy to-morrow night. Say nothing at home." I did not yield, though he pressed me hard, and swore he would deal honorably by me. The me hard, and swore he would deal honorably by me. The influence of your good teaching was upon me then, and guided me aright. The strength of that influence was proved by my love for Clifford and by what I suffered in

refusing him. Then he came to London and sought and found me there. And still he pressed me to fly with him, and still I refused. When you told me that we were to go to America I was overwhelmed with despair at the thought of losing him, and I said I would not go with you. On that night I met him by appointment and informed him of your plans. He commended me for my spirit, and proposed that I should go with him at once, and not return home; but when I spoke again of marriage his only reply was that I must trust him entirely, and that he would be true and faithful to me. "I will wait for you in London, and when you are ready to marry me I will be yours." He protested that I had no confidence in him, and that he would be satisfied with nothing less than my immediate consent to his proposal. "You must choose," he said, "between me and your people. If you go from me to-night I will never see you again." I did choose, though my heart was almost broken, loving him as I did. I returned home, and told you I would come with you to America. You will remember all this.

"'I am interrupted, and must wait till I am alone to continue; but I will manage to put what I have written into the post, so that you may know, if you never hear from me again, that I did not fall without a struggle."

## CHAPTER XVII.

"'I know where I left off. There are times when my memory is quite gone, when reason deserts me, when I live only in a world of phantoms. The images that haunt me are not always horrible; God is merciful, and sends me dreams which banish the horrors of the living day. I am grateful for them, though the awakening is terrible. It is when I am sensible and thinking of you that my memory returns. So now I know, being alone, with no one watching me, that I left off where I chose between Clifford and you.

"'I never expected to see him again, and I thought

that no hope of happiness remained to me. When I saw him on the steamer, on the day we left England for America, I was dizzy with wonder and joy, and when I heard from his own lips that he felt it would be worse than death to part with me, and that that was the reason of his joining the ship, the world was a brighter, happier world than it had been since the night I tore myself away from him in London.

"" Do you need further proof of my devotion?" he asked; and I answered, "No."

"'From that moment I was his slave. Everything I told you about him and myself was spoken at his dictation. He had no business to transact in America; he was going because I was going, and we were to get married there. So I lied to you, at his bidding, he promising that when he had conquered the resentment he felt against you we should all be friends once more. I looked forward to that time. The deceit I was practising did not shock me then as it shocks me now; it seemed a small price to pay for the proof of love he had given me. I believed in him as you believe in God, and thought he could do no wrong. So we landed in New York, and I left you without saying goodbye. We did not meet again till we saw you in Central Park.

"'On the day after our arrival Clifford took me to a private office, and there some words were spoken by a man I never saw again, and Clifford and I signed a paper which he put in his pocket. Before that he had placed a ring on my finger, and when we were in the street, he told me we were married by civil process, and that there was no country in the world in which these things were so easily and quickly done as in America. He spoke to me then about his private position in England; it was the first time he had done so, and I believed every word he said, though I did not rightly understand what it was all about. Our marriage must be kept secret for a time, he said, or his prospects would be ruined. He was dependent upon a relative, an old lady over eighty years of age, who could, not possibly live more than a year or two, and who had made when she died he would be her heir, and there would be no longer any occasion to keep the secret of our marriage. I was very happy at that time; Clifford was behaving most kindly to me, and as I went by his name no shadow of doubt crossed my mind that he was deceiving me. He warned me to say nothing whatever of our marriage to you in case we met. "I will tell her when we are friends," he said, "but she must promise me first to keep our secret faithfully till my good old aunt is gone." That is why I said nothing to you in Central Park, and why, if you had asked me direct questions, I could not have answered them, for my husband claimed obedience from me, and it was my duty to obey. I wrote to you without his knowledge, and I was careful that he should not discover it; had he done so, and forbade my writing, I could not have acted in opposition to his wishes.

"'When was it that I seemed to see clouds gathering around me? Before we left New York for England, certainly—yes, certainly before that time. The first two or three weeks he was constantly with me; he never went out without me, and he was always studying how we should pass the days agreeably. "Do you like this—would you like that? Shall we go here to-night, or is there any other place you would like me to take you?" Then came a gradual change; he left me in my room in the hotel for hours together of a night, and when I ventured to complain a little he told me not to be too exacting. My temper is not a patient one; you know that, and perhaps I was unwise in showing him this too soon; but I could

not control myself. Clifford only laughed at me.

"" We are none of us perfect," he said. "I am beginning to find you out, Adeline; presently you will begin to

find me out."

"'It was not till some time afterwards that, in thinking of these words, I knew they must have been spoken with meaning, and that Clifford was not sorry to discover that I was not an angel, because it furnished him with an excuse for his own wickedness. When he ordered me to pack my trunks suddenly for England we had a scene; I was hot, he was cool.

""If you don't care to come," he said, "I will go

alone."

"'A chill struck my heart as he said this; and on that evening I began to think of the future with fear.

"" Will you come, or stay?" he asked.

""You insult me by asking such a question," I answered. "My place is by your side."

"'He looked at me quietly for a minute or two, but said nothing more, nor did I. On the following day we started for England. I was very ill during the voyage, but he paid me little attention. He seemed to take no pleasure in my society, and his manner towards me was entirely changed. It was the same in London, and I was frightened to complain, for fear of angering him. I had no one but him, not a friend to whom I could speak, whose advice I could ask. Sometimes, when I forced myself to be bright, and took pains with my dress and appearance to please him, he behaved better to me; but I could not always play the hypocrite. Besides, I was weak and ill, and utterly, utterly wretched. .

"'It was here, in Paris, that I heard of my disgrace; it was here, in this hateful city, reeking with vice and shame, that I learned what I had become. I must hide nothing from you; I stab myself by showing you how vile and abandoned I am. Before the blow fell I began to drink, and I do not seek to excuse myself by saying it was Clifford who led me on. But it was he who placed temptation in my way, who drank with me, who first said: ""Drink, and forget."

"'It does not affect him, but it drags me down, down! I loathe it and love it. "Here am I, at your hand," it whispers, for it is always there; he does not seek to deprive me of my solace, I will say that of him; "here I am, at your hand. Drink, and be happy." Be happy! What a mockery! But I cannot resist it. Even now my eyes are

wandering towards it, even now my trembling hands are stretched towards it; but I resist, because I am writing to you, because, before I am utterly lost, you shall know the

full extent of my degradation.

"'We had a quarrel. Whose fault it was I cannot say -his, mine; we each had an equal share in the scenes that were growing common. He had left me alone for two long days and nights. On the second night I went to seek him, Where? I knew not. I did not know the name of a place he frequented; Clifford can be very close about his affairs. The streets were open to me; I went into them, and wandered hither and thither, looking into the faces of men whose figure resembled Clifford's. Some looked back into my face, and laughed; some followed me till I quickened my steps and left them behind. I was familiar with the neighborhood but not with the names of the streets I walked through; I am a greater stranger here in Paris than I was in London. There is not a man or a woman whose hand I have the right to clasp in friendship. The city was in a glare; the lights of shame were flaming all around me. I trod the principal thoroughfares; it was no use to look for Clifford in narrow streets; he is fond of gaiety, laughter, quick life. "I hate your dull, moping faces," he has said to me; "give me light and animation." I sought him where he was most likely to be found, and sought him in vain. So hurriedly had I left our apartment—having only one object in view—that it was not till I was in the open that I saw I had forgotten my gloves. It mattered little; I could keep my hands beneath my mantle. I continued my search till midnight, when the people were coming from the theatres. I must have been delirious from fatigue and despair, else I should not have darted forward and placed my hand on a man's arm, thinking it was Clifford. The man was a stranger to me, and a thief; he seized my hand, and in a moment the rings were torn from my fingers, and I was flying in terror from him, dreading further violence. I did not stop till my breath was spent, and then I found myself in a part of the city which was not familiar to me.

The street in which I paused to recover my breath was almost deserted. I did not care to accost anyone to inquire my way, and I wandered about till I heard the bells strike the hour of two. I looked around and recognized the locality, and shortly afterwards I reached our apartment. The man who opened the gate looked strangely at me as I passed through, but I did not linger to explain to him the cause of my late arrival. I ran upstairs in the hope of seeing Clifford, but the rooms were empty. Then I looked at my bruised fingers, and to my horror discovered that all the rings Clifford had given me were gone, even my wedding ring. It was the loss of this ring which cut me to the heart; I did not value the others, although they had been Clifford's gifts to me in happier times. Dressed as I was I threw myself on a couch and fell asleep.

"'When I awoke it was broad daylight, and Clifford

was sitting in the room.

"" Awake at last," he said, and his voice was not unkind; in was indulgent, even cordial. "You sleep well, Adeline."

"'I approached him, and asked him where he had been

these last two days and nights.

"" We are free agents, you and I," he said, with a wicked smile. "I might retaliate by asking where you have been, and why I find you in this state at such an hour."

"'I passed my hand across my eyes; the full reflection of what I had passed through had not come to me. I looked down at my dress; it was torn and disordered; then I remembered all, and I related what had occurred, sobbing bitterly, as I spoke of the theft of my wedding ring.

""It is an ingenious story," said Clifford, "and well told. If I were a younger man I might believe it."

""You do not believe it?" I exclaimed, indignantly.

""I am not exactly a fool," he said.
"Dumb with passion and anguish I sank into a chair. "" I have something to say to you," he continued, "of an interesting nature. If you are going to make a scene

I shall bid you good day, and you may never hear it. Be cool, as I am, and we may come to an understanding."

"'Yes, he was cool, while every nerve in my body was

quivering.

"" Shall I speak?" he asked.

"" Yes, speak," I replied.

""Observe first," he said, "that I have heard your story, and make no comment upon it."

"" Except," I said, keeping my passion down, "that

you do not believe it."

""Therefore," he continued, "I do not question you about it. You are agitated, naturally, at your failure to impose upon me, but I recognize your right to act as you please, and will not trouble you to invent another version of your doings last night which might have a better success."

"" You are inflicting a foul wrong upon me," I said, "and when you speak of my right to act as I please, you are speaking of what does not exist. I have no such

right."

"" You have the right," he said. "I repeat it, and before I have done I may convince you of the fact. You leave these rooms at nine o'clock last night; you return at three this morning. Do I complain? Not at all; and yet you are angry because I do not scold you."

"" I have told you why I went out," I said, "and how

it was I kept out so long."

"" And I have heard what you said," was his reply, "and place my own interpretation upon it. An unreasonable man would find fault with you, and I do not utter one word of reproach. You feel lonely; you go out to seek amusement."

"'I interrupted him. "Take care. You may go too far"

"" As the subject is displeasing to you," he said, "I will drop it. If it is revived you will be the responsible party. There is really a kind of poetical justice in the circumstance of your losing what you call your weddingring."

"" What I call my wedding-ring!"

""That is what I said. There are plenty of wedding rings on the fingers of women who have no legitimate right to wear them. Why do you stare at me? The truth must be told some time, and there is no time like the present. It is an awkward confession to make, but the honest truth is—"

"' He paused, seeing, I think, that I was on the point of swooning. Uncorking a bottle of champagne he poured out a tumbler ful, and held it towards me. I took it from his treacherous hand, and drank it feverishly. It brought strength back to me.
""Let me hear," I said, "what the honest truth is."

"" The honest truth, Adeline, is that you are not my wife."

"'How I managed to preserve my senses at this infamous revelation is a mystery, but some inward force sus-

tained me. He continued:

""Now, you know. There was no other way for it, Adeline. I was madly infatuated, and you insisted upon being married; so, to please you, we went through a meaningless ceremony. We have got along badly lately, and have found that we are not suited to each other. Let us make the best of a bad bargain; let us part friends. I will see that you are provided for. No man could speak fairer. What do you say to my proposal?"

"'I stood before him, with my hand on the table, steadying myself, and commanding my voice, still inwardly

sustained.

"" This," I replied. "Whether you have practiced upon me an infamous deception or not, I am your wife in the eyes of God. To the last day of my wretched life I will stand by my right. Judge by my calmness in this, the most terrible moment in my life, whether I shall adhere to my resolve. I have lost your love-I knew that long ago—but I will not let you go. I will follow you and pursue you; if you desert me now I will find a means to expose you and hold you up to the scorn and contempt of the world; your name shall be a bye-word of shame, aye, of shame as great and deep as mine. Only by my death shall you be released from the vows you swore to me, God shall punish you, and I commit vengeance into His hands. I am an erring, weak, and sinful woman, but you shall not be permitted to evade the double duty by which you are bound—your duty to me whom you confess to have shamefully betrayed, and your duty to your unborn child. Through me, and through your child, retribution shall fall upon you."

"' What more I said I cannot recall. My strength gave

way, and I became unconscious. .

\* \* \* \* \* \*

"'How many days, or weeks have passed since I last wrote? I cannot say. Time is blotted out. A woman is attending to me.

"" Who are you?" I ask. "You are a stranger to

me."

""Be composed," she answers. "I am your nurse."

"" Who sent you here?"

"" Your friend."

"" Friend! I have none."

"" You have. Do not agitate yourself. It is bad for you."

"" I must know who the person you call my friend is."

"" Be calm. It is an English gentleman."

"" Is his name Clifford?"

"" That is the name. Ask no more questions."

"" I will not be silent. You shall answer me. What

are your instructions? To kill me?"

"" Mon Dieu! No. To take care of you. To give you everything you want. To be good to you. It is not every woman in your position who has such a friend. You are very fortunate."

""Am I? Where is he-my husband?"

"" Your husband?"

"" My husband. Do you hear me? You are looking for my wedding ring. It was stolen from me. Where is he?"

"" I do not know."

"" Are you paid to give me that answer? Am I in

"" You are."

"" The vile, hateful city!"

"" You are raving. It is the brightest, the most beautiful on the face of the earth."

"" Yes, you are a Frenchwoman. Thank God, I am

not. Have you been long with me?"

"" Three weeks."

"" And I have lain here unconscious all the time. Has he not been here once to see me?"

"" I do not know."

"" You are a poor creature to answer in that way. You must know if you have been with me. But you are paid, you are paid."

"'" Attend to me, madam," says the woman roughly. "If you are civil I will be civil, and it will be for your good. If you are not it will be bad for you. I will give you a lesson."

"'She holds me down with one arm and hand; her muscles are like steel; I cannot raise myself an inch. I make but one effort; then I submit, and seeing that I am

lying still she removes her hand, saying,

"" Some questions I will answer, some I will not. It is for you to make me a friend or an enemy."

"" You shall be my friend."

""It is good. Say what I can do for you."

"" There is a little desk somewhere."

"" Your desk. Yes, it is here."

"" Bring it to me."

"'She brings it to the bed, and assists me to rise, putting pillows at my back. Then she brings me my clothes, and, although I am very weak, I find the key of the desk in a pocket, and open it, the woman watching me. A purse is in the desk, with money in it.

"" How much will a wedding ring cost?" I ask.

"" A wedding ring!" she cries, raising her hands and laughing. "But what for? It makes no difference!"

"" We are friends," I say. "Measure my finger, and tell me how much a ring will cost."

"" Perhaps forty francs," she says, humoring me.
"" Here are two English sovereigns. Go out and buy

"'She laughs more heartily than before, takes the money and leaves the room. My purse contains six sovereigns and some silver, so I have four pieces of gold left. I have more than that. In a secret drawer in the desk are two five pound notes and ten more sovereigns in gold. I take this money from the drawer and secrete it under my bed. The purse I leave as it is, as the woman saw it, with the four sovereigns and the silver in it. She can steal that if she is so inclined.

"'What is it that attracts me on a chest of drawers near my bed? I look at it, I turn my eyes away, I look at again. Very, very slowly, because of my weak state, I crawl from the bed, and fill a glass from the bottle and drink it off. It warms, it cheers, it exilarates me. No more; I must be cunning, wary. I creep back to bed, all my pulses singing, my wretchedness lightened, and presently the woman returns, humming the refrain of a popular song.

"'" I have it, my babe," she sings, "the magic ring, which some wear who should not, and some don't who

should. The difference between them is——"

"'She blows a light breath through the hoop, and uses it as an eyeglass, looking at me through it. Then she tries it on my finger, and we both contemplate it. She regards it as a joke, I as a link of infamy, but neither of us expresses her thought.

"" It is thirty-five francs," she says.

"'You may keep the change," I say, "for your trouble, and because we are friends."

"" You are charming, 'she says. "Yes, my babe, we

are friends."

"'As, by my directions, she takes the desk from the bed and places it on a chair by my side, her eyes fall upon the bottle. She lifts it to the light, and turns her eyes upon me.

"" It has done me good," I say.

""One more small glass, then," she says, merrily, "and

I will drink with you."

"'From that moment she seems to understand my craving, and she assists me in satisfying it.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

"Another interval of time, the duration of which I cannot state. I wake from a long, long dream, burning with fever. Another woman is in the room now with my nurse.

"" To-morrow?" she says to her companion, in a tone

of inquiry.

""Not to-morrow," the strange woman replies; "but before the week is over."

"'What do they mean? I toss my head this way and that. The stranger leaves the room.

"" I am on fire!" I cry.

"'Drink then, my pretty one," says my nurse, "and keep your strength. You will want it all."

"'She sits by the bedside, and we make merry together.

She sings snatches of songs, and I join in.

"" In two weeks you will be up, and dancing about," she says.

"" I should like to dance now," I reply, but the at-

tempt I make is futile.

"'I fall back on my pillow, and watch her figure swell to an enormous size, then dwindle smaller and smaller till

she lies in her chair in baby clothes.

"Baby clothes! The room is filled with them. Now I know what the two women meant when they were talking together. My baby is coming, and will be in my arms before the week is over. Where is the father? Where is my false husband? He is my husband, though I loathe the sight of him. What an infamous trick! And once I looked up to him as the embodiment of truth and manliness. There he is now, waiting for me at the trysting place. The night is dark, but I can see his handsome smiling face.

"" My darling!" he whispers, and presses me to his

heart.

"'Ah! He is choking me! I am suffocated—dying— "" Be still, be still!"

"'It is my nurse's voice, and her arms enfold me, and

hold me fast.

"" Be still, be still! You will do yourself harm. Do you hear, my pretty one. Think of your baby. Drink this."

"'Something is poured down my throat. I have no

power to resist, no power to move.

"'Black night enshrouds me. I wander in darkness. Not a rift of light, not a glimpse of the sun. There are other shadows around and about me.

"" Speak to me, sister."

"'The voice is breathed into space; no mortal ear can hear the sound; it is the voice of a living ghost.

"" What do you want?"

"" Where is the sun? Where is the stars?"

"" Dead! Clifford has killed them!"

"" Then there is nothing to live for. Come with me to the river."

"" No, no!"

"" Come with me, come with me. There is light at the bottom. Listen to the plash of water. It is singing a lullaby. Have you not suffered enough. You have only one heart, and it is broken. Why do you linger?"
""Hush! Do you not hear?"

"" What ?"

"" A baby's cry. No, it is fancy—the voice of conscience. I will not come with you. I will not kill the unborn!"

"" Fool! It will be a merciful deed. If your child is a man, he will be like Clifford, and will break a loving woman's heart, as yours is broken. If it is a girl, she will be as you are now, wandering in the black shroud of the world. We are at the brink of the river. The water is cool and refreshing. Take my hand, and we will plunge in together."

"" I will not, I will not! My sin is great; I will not

add to it."

"'The ghostly shade seizes me by the hair. I struggle with it; I shriek for help. . . .

\* \* \* \* \* \* \*

"" Will you not be quiet? Attend to me, obstinate one, or you shall be tied down."

"'Again my nurse. The horrible dream is over.

""I am quiet, nurse. It was a dream that frightened me. I thought it was real. Do not hold me so tight; you hurt me. I will be quite quiet. You are a nurse, and ought to know that I am as weak as a child. Thank you, thank you. O, you can trust me. I am not a good woman, but you can trust me."

""There, my pretty one, I am sorry for you. I did not mean to hurt you, but there is another to take care of as well as you. Yes, you are weak now, but you are very strong sometimes. Your face is wet; your hair is in disorder. When you were little your mother used to do what

I am doing for you."

"" I do not remember."

""You can remember, if you try. I am twice your age, and I remember well. There were four of us, all girls. Our friends said there were more than enough of us. All the other married people had only two each—just two, no more; they said it was the proper number. We were four, and to-day we are all living."

"" Your sisters are not like me."

"" How ?"

"" They are good women?"

""Oh, yes, they are good—as good as their neighbors. Don't talk so much of goodness, my pretty one; it is a mistake. Life is not too long. It is when the sun shines that we should enjoy the warmth. Now you look sweet and clean. You feel so, do you not? Where is she, your mother?"

"" Dead, long ago."

""But there must be someone. You did not grow up like a weed. You are a flower, and if you are clever you have a fine time before you. Someone must have cared for you; you have been well taught."

"" I will not speak of her. I was wicked and ungrateful to her."

"'There is a long silence; a shivering fit seizes me;

my limbs are trembling beneath the bedclothes.

"" Nurse!"

"" Yes, my pretty one?"

"" Give me something to drink. I am fainting."

"" Alas, my child, there is nothing."
"" Is there no money in my purse?"

"" No, my child. I spent the last, as you bade me,

and every drop is drank."

"'Another silence, during which I grope under the mattress. Presently;

"" Here is an English sovereign, nurse. Go, and buy

what I want."

"" You are clever. Yes, my pretty one, I will go."

"'Again, for a little while, I conquer the demon that is driving me mad. . . . .

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

"'Oh, my baby, my treasure, my sweet angel from heaven! She was in my arms, her little hand in mine. I opened my eyes, and gazed upon her lovely face. I closed them, and folded her to my breast. The demon was vanquished. It was day, and the sun was shining. It was night, and I saw the stars.

"" There, my pretty one," said my nurse. "You are

happy now."

"" I am. I ought not to be. I am a wicked mother.

I have no milk to give my child."

"" That is right, the doctor says. It would not do—no, it would not do. She will be better as it is, and so will you be. She will grow up beautiful, like you."

"" Is beauty a blessing, nurse?"

"" Listen to the pretty mother. Is beauty a blessing? If it was only to be purchased for money, what sums would be paid for it? What would the world be without beauty, my pretty mother? Beauty and pleasure—that makes a song we are all glad to sing."

"" There was a thought in my mind. If time would stand still! If there were no to-morrow!"

"" Is it really true, nurse, as you have told me, that I

am very violent sometimes?"

""It is true, O, yes, my pretty mother. Many times, many times."

"" And strong?"

"" Very strong. To look at you now it is not to be believed! But it is true for all that."

"" And that I do not know what I am doing?"

"" It is as I have said."

"" Do not let me hurt my baby!"

""It shall not be. What am I here for? I will see to it."

"" Something is coming into the room, nurse!"

"" It is your fancy-nothing more."

"" It is not my fancy. Clifford is here—at last, at

last. Clifford! Clifford!"

- "'He stood, with folded arms, his face to mine. I called to him, entreated him, implored him to confess that the base story he had told me was a lie. He did not move; he did not speak. I continued to implore. I asked him to take his child in his arms, and, if his story was true, to remove the burden of shame which is killing me, to give me the right, even at this late hour, to look my fellow-creatures in the face. Still he neither spoke nor moved. And where was my child? It was gone from my side; it had been taken from me.
- ""You shall not rob me of her!" I screamed, and would have flung myself upon him, but I was thrust back, and imprisoned by stronger arms than mine.

"'A vapor floated before me. My voice failed me; my

mind was a blank. .

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

"'Whether months or years have passed I cannot say. I boasted of my memory once; it has failed me, and I can no longer depend upon it.

"'I have been haunted by visions and terrible images

and fancies. I cannot separate the real from the unreal. I know not what is false and what is true. Here in my loneliness I sit and write, and what I write shall go to her to whom I pour out my soul. I will find a way. Have I not succeeded in stealing paper and pen and ink? In the midst of my delirium I have an occasional hour of reason, an hour in which I am able to think of the horrible past, to grope through fact and fancy. "Be calm, Adeline," I say to myself; "be strong; hold fast to the present; brush aside the phantoms; set the truth plainly before you."

"'I will do what I can. If I fail, forgive me, and out of the goodness of your heart unravel the mesh which

bewilders me.

"'It is true that I live—it is the unhappy truth. I prove

it. This sheet of paper is stained with my blood.

"'It did not hurt me. I can conquer physical pain, if I cannot conquer the phantoms which lurk in the air. I know they are there, though at this moment I cannot behold them. I cannot because I will not. I could call them to my sight, but I hold them back till I have finished the task I have set myself. While I have a spark of reason left I will use it to tell my story to the end. Pity me, pity me!

"'Yes, it is true that I live. Feeble as I am, I still draw breath. The door is locked, but I can see through the window. There are trees with waving branches upon the land. Birds flutter through them. The blue clouds sail on. I am warm. It is summertime. Summertime! Alas!

"'It is true I had a child, a baby girl, with breath like the perfume of violets, shaming mine. I held her in my arms; I kissed her sweet mouth.' She is gone; she is lost.

Dead, dead!

"'So they told me. I do not remember when, but they told me. I am ready to swear it. O, my baby, my sweet! Would you have lived if I had been a better mother to you? Is it I who worshipped you—is it I who killed you? They did not say so! "Murderess!" Other things as horrible have been whispered to me, as horrible and as false as this. It is done to madden me. I have heard it said that I am mad. But do mad people do what I am going to do now?

- "'There was bread in the room. I broke some into crumbs and put them out on the window-sill. There are iron bars to the windows, through which I can thrust my hand.
- "'The birds came and flew away with the crumbs, and I did not stand far from them. Would they have done that if I had been mad?

"'And yet what I have heard them say is true, but not always true—not true at this moment; only they doubt whether I am ever sane.

"'This is not a prison; it is a private asylum for those

who give way to their horrible craving for drink.

""Do you wish to get well?" It was a doctor, not the nurse who attended me in Paris, who asked the question. "Do you wish to live?"

""Yes," I answered.

""Sign this paper," he said, "and there is hope for

you. Refuse, and you are lost."

- ""Why should I sign a paper," I said. "You have done what you liked with me; you are doing what you like with me."
- ""What is being done," he said, "is for your good. There are times when you are not accountable for your actions. You are an English subject, and you cannot be taken where you can be cured without your written consent."

"" When I am well," I said, "shall I be set free?"

"" You will," he replied. "For your own sake, for your

child's sake, sign."

"'I put my name to the paper, which the doctor read first; but I did not hear what he said. My only thought was that I must try to get well for the sake of my child.

"'There is a noise in the passage without. Some one is coming in. I must hide this paper, and play the hypo-

crite.

"'The door is unlocked, and the master of the house enters. I do not know his name, and I have seen him only twice before. He reminded me then of a fox, and he reminds me of one now. He has a long, thin, pointed face,

with cunning eyes, which say, "Do not trust me, do not trust me." He does not think that his eyes betray him.

"'I am on my guard. On the two previous occasions on which I saw him I was ill, and we held no conversation. He spoke only to a woman who attends to me, whom I address, as she bade me, as Gabrielle. She is quite a different person from the nurse who looked after me in Paris, and looks as if her life had been a life of trouble. I have asked her questions about myself, which she has evaded answering, not from unkindness, but from fear of the master.

"" Pray do not press me," she said. "The master will come and see you one day, and then you can speak to him.

But be careful what you say; he is very clever."

"'By clever she meant cunning, so when he enters my room now I set myself a task, to be as cunning as he is. There are a good many things I want to know about, and I do not see how I can get the information from any one but the master.

"'Gabrielle follows him into the room, and stands submissively at the door. The master holds out his hand, and I place mine in it. He presses my fingers caressingly, insinuatingly, as though he would read my thoughts through them.

"'" You are better to-day," he says.

"" I am well," I reply.

"" No, no," he says, in gentle correction, "better, but not well."

"" You know best," I say.

"" Yes," he says, "I know best. Gabrielle says you wish to speak to me."

"" I asked her to tell you so."

"'" I am here, you see," he says, almost gaily, "at your request. You are calm?"

"" Quite calm."

""What we have to guard against," he says, his foxlike eyes fixed on my "ace, "is dissimulation, deceit, artfulness to gain the end a patient has in view. The practice of these deceptions is always followed by punishment. Is it not, Gabrielle?" "" Always, master," she answers.

""I am not clever enough to deceive you," Isay, "and if I were there is nothing to be gained by it."

"" That is well said."

"'He motions to Gabrielle to leave the room, and the master and I are alone.

- "" You wish to speak to me," he says; "I also wish to speak to you. You wish to know something. Let me see if I can answer.
  - "" How long ago is it since I was brought here?" Iask.

"" Eight months," he answers.

"" Is it possible?"

"" It is better than possible; it is true. The date of the entrance of every patient in this house is recorded in the books."

"" I signed a paper, did I not?"

- ""You did. Without your signature you could not have been admitted."
- "" Entering of my own free will, can I leave of my own free will?"
- "" It will be prudent," he says, "not to immediately answer the question."

"" You may answer it at another time?"

"" Perhaps at another time."

"" You perceive that I am rational."

"' 'Appearances are not to be trusted."

"'Desirous to avoid the least sympton of contention I pass from the subject.

"" I had a child," I say, my voice trembling, my heart

throbbing.

""I was so informed. You have lost her?"

"'There was no compassion in his voice; it was as cold as steel.

"" It is really true?" I ask, with difficulty controlling

my voice.

""It is really true."

"" I do not speak for several minutes. I expected this confirmation, but could not bear it without deep suffering.

"'Having borne this ordeal, I could bear others.

"" What malady was I suffering from when I was brought to this house?"

"" It is expressed in the document you signed."

"" But let me hear my shame!" I plead.

"" As you will," says the master. "You had a craving for strong drink which was driving you mad. You came here to be cured."

"" Am I cured?"

"" I cannot say."

""Surely you are wise enough and clever enough to tell me! I implore you!"

"" I will tell you to-morrow."

"'With this assurance I am forced to be content. Tomorrow! It is only a few hours. And now for infor-

mation upon a matter which has agitated my mind.

""This is a private establishment?" I ask. I know that it is so because Madame Gabrielle has told me, but the reason why I ask the master is that it leads naturally to what I wish to learn.

"" It is."

"" Kept up at your own expense?"

"" Assuredly."

"'" You are a philanthropist?"

"" Oh, no; I am a business nan."

""But a philanthropist as well." He looks at me, and shrugs his shoulders. "It costs money being kept here?"

"" Yes, it costs money."
"" Who pays for me?"

""Ah," he says, repeating my question, "who pays for you?"

"" Will you not tell me?"

"" There are confidences," he replies. "Be content that you have friends."

"" Friends?"

"" One, at least."

"'A glance at his face assures me that it will be useless to press the inquiry, but with Clifford in my mind I venture to ask, "" Is he a gentleman?"

"" Oh, yes, undoubtedly a gentleman, having money."
"That is the test, in his view, and he states it with an indisputable air.

"" Has he been to see me?" I ask.

- "" No, he has not."
- "" Where is he now?"
- "" I do not know."
- "" But he pays regularly, does he not, or you could not afford to keep me."

"" He pays," says the master, "through a third party."

- "'Then he puts an end to my questions by saying," I have been very indulgent. Ask nothing more to-day, but answer me."
- "'He interrogates me as to who I am, whether I have parents, or brothers or sisters living. Evidently he is curious about my history, and knows very little concerning it. I answer him truthfully up to a certain point, but I give him no clue of the one friend I have in America, and when he leaves me I see that he is dissatisfied, and

that he believes I have been telling him untruths.

"This that I have written must go to the post. Only Madame Gabrielle can do it for me. It it strange that I have contrived, through all my troubles and illness, to keep by me one five pound note, which I sewed in my dress when I was in Paris. Before Gabrielle enters the room, after the departure of the master, I have picked the threads and extracted my treasure, but when she comes in I do not know how to commence. She assists me, however, by asking if the master had been kind to me, and I tell her what passed between us; and then I confess to her that I said nothing to him of the friend I have in a distant land.

"" I have written to her," I say, "and there is no one

but you who would post my letter to her."

"'She looks alarmed, but I appeal to her so successfully that she promises to do what I ask. I gave her the five pound note, and she is to bring me the change for it, and some postage stamps. It is while she is gone that I am adding these lines.

"'If I am cured I shall surely be allowed to leave this place. The master will tell me to-morrow. But why could he not tell me to-day? Being well, they can have no excuse to detain me here. I will go and seek Clifford, but first I must see my child's grave.

"'Where have they buried her? I have seen pictures of spots where I should like her sweet body to rest, where I would like to rest myself. As I write, it seems as if I can feel the tender clasp of her baby fingers, as if I can see

her lovely eyes and face-

"'Hush, Adeline—be calm, do not give way. So much depends upon it. Your life, your liberty, your future. To be confined within these walls for ever would truly drive me mad. "A craving for strong drink which was driving you mad." The master's words. It was Clifford who led me to it. Upon his soul, as well as upon mine, lie the sin and the shame.

"'What is the meaning of the sudden thirst that steals upon me, that parches my throat, that causes my eyes to wander to every corner of the room? Am I cured? I shall know to-morrow. I am trembling in every limb. Gabrielle's step without. I must hide my writing—no, I am forgetting. She is to post it for me.

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

"'To-morrow has come and gone, and I know whether I am cured.

"'I had fallen asleep in my chair, and when I awoke no one was with me. There was a dim light burning, depending from the centre of the ceiling, where I could not reach it. The parching of my throat continued, and I went to the table to get some drink. There was a wooden cup there, an earthen water bottle, and another bottle. I took out the cork, and smelt it. I held the bottle in my shuddering hands, put it down—carefully, so that it should not be broken—and tottered back to my chair.

"'I can recall every thought, every little incident of those few conscious minutes. I covered my eyes with my hands, and struggled with the temptation. But my throat was burning, and a devil was whispering in my ear. "Don't be a fool," it said. "Open your eyes and look round the room. It resembles a tomb. Bring light and gladness into it, and to your heart as well. It is so simple. Just one little drop. Take it as a medicine—you need it. Why spend the night in wretchedness? Just one little drop!"

"'As a medicine, yes—and I do need it, sorely, sorely.

Just one little drop—no more; and I would put water to it. Why, a doctor would give it to me! Where, then, was the

harm of helping myself?

"'I rose, and stood by the table, the wooden cup in my hand. I poured some brandy into it, and added water; then, without pausing to think, drank it off.

"'In a moment everything was changed. Gloom fled from the room, from my heart. I laughed aloud. But I had taken so little! If those few drops had effected such a transformation, had made me strong and happy, and bright, how much would a little more do?

"'The second time I drank it without water, and then, in wild and joyous excitement, I drank again and again, till not a drop was left. The bottle dropped from my hand, and rolled upon the floor. I tried to catch it, and in the

attempt fell, and could not rise.

"'Four days ago I made up my mind to escape, out I could not have succeeded without the assistance of Gabrielle. She heard my story; she told me hers. It is the old story of betrayal and desertion. She was going to leave her service in a month she said, and she would risk being turned away before. I recompensed her by giving her twenty francs. I have very little money left now.

"'I could obtain no satisfaction from the master. I told him that I did not intend to stay any longer in his house, and he said he would think about it. Had my door been left open I should have walked out at once, but he kept it always locked, and he took care to have every movement I made watched. The bond of sympathy established between me and Gabrielle caused me to open my heart freely to her.

"" Can he confine me here all my life?" I asked.
""I should say not," replied Gabrielle. "You are an English subject."

"'I thanked her for the hint, and two or three days afterwards I asked the master whether he had thought about my intention to leave his house.

"" I have written about it," he answered.

"" To whom?" I inquired.

"" To the party who is responsible," he said.

"" I am the only party responsible for my confinement in this prison," I said.

"'He interrupted me, saying it was not a prison.

"" That is what I understood," I said. "I have done no wrong to anyone but myself, have committed no crime for which I am liable to the law. Give me the name of the responsible party, as you call him."

"" That," said the master, "I decline to do."

""I will give it to you," I said. "His name is Clifford."

"'Fox as he was, I saw in his eyes that I was right, and I saw, also, that he was uneasy at the bold attitude I was taking. This made me bolder still.

"' If he has authority over me," I continued, "he must

be my husband. Has he informed you that he is?"

"" I have asked him no questions," he said.

"'" Say that he is my husband," I pursued. "I am an English subject, and he cannot confine me here against my will. I revoke the document I signed, which I mistakenly signed. If you keep me imprisoned in your house, which you have told me is a private establishment, it is unlawful, and you can be punished for it."

"" You can speak very freely," he said," "when you

are in possession of your senses, but when you are not——"
""Even then," I said, "I am my own mistress, and not your prisoner. Am I free to go now?"

"'" I am afraid," he said, "that you must wait till I

receive instructions.

"" I will wait," I said, "but not for long."

"" A week passed, and still he paltered with me. Then

I resolved to escape.

"'It was done in the night. I tore the sheets from my bed into strips, and tying them together, with Gabrielle's

help, fastened them to the window sill. But I did not dare to descend to the ground by that means; it was done only to save Gabrielle from being implicated, and to lead them to believe that I had escaped by the window. I went out through the door of my room and the street door, which Gabrielle unlocked and locked, and I stood, a free woman in an unknown land, surrounded by darkness.

"'I had received some instructions from Gabrielle which I endeavored to follow. Her sister lived a dozen miles away, and Gabrielle gave me a letter to her which would ensure for me food and shelter as long as I was able to pay for them. I was to follow the high road till it branched out left and right, and my directions from that point were sufficiently clear to lead me to the cottage. But in the dark I was too frightened to proceed, so I walked only a hundred yards or so, and waited for the sun. It was weary work, and I was not as strong as I thought. I had no alternative, however.

"In the matter of money I had deceived Gabrielle, as I am deceiving everybody. My life, indeed, is now nothing but deceit. I told Gabrielle that when I was free I should be able easily to obtain what money I required, and the simple soul believed me. Perhaps that was the reason why she elected to be my friend. I cannot say. There is only one being in the world who is absolutely truth-

ful and good—the lady I once called mother.
"'The first tinge of daylight showed me the road, and I proceeded as quickly as my numbed limbs would allow. I was fearful of being pursued and caught, but I had resolved to fight for my freedom with all my strength. Nothing of the sort occurred. So far as I knew I was not followed, nor was I molested by any of the work-people I met, though many gazed in curiosity after me. My feet were tender and my frame weak, and when the full sun rose I was already exhausted. I stopped at an inn and had something to eat and drink, a dish of eggs and brown bread, and two glasses of a kind of cherry brandy. I would have drank more, but I had strength

this time to resist the craving. Helpless, I might fall into the toils again. I knew it to be imperative that I should preserve my senses—that was my only reason for

resisting.

'Slowly I went on, and at nightfall was some distance from the cottage. At another cottage I succeeded in obtaining shelter; they had no bed to offer me, but they spread straw upon the earth which formed the flooring of their home, and there I lay till morning, paying them a trifle for the accommodation. At noon of the second day I reached the cottage where Gabrielle's sister lives. I presented Gabrielle's letter, and was warmly welcomed.
"" You can have Gabrielle's little room," the woman

said, "till she comes. She says she is coming soon. By that time you will want to go away."

"'I made a bargain with her for food and lodgment; so small was the sum she asked that I was able to pay her four weeks in advance, and still have a little money left. .I would not rob the poor woman, though she would have trusted me. When the time came for payment my purse might be empty, so I secured her and myself for a month.

"'She took me to Gabrielle's room, and I helped her to set it straight; then I lay down on the straw mattress to rest. I slept, and in my sleep, as it seemed to me, I heard the voice of a woman speaking and singing to her babe. It is a sound there is no mistaking. The tears ran down my face; I put my hands to my eyes; my fingers were wet. I was awake, then; it was no dream, for I still heard the singing. I crept down stairs, and there was a baby in the woman's lap. I held out my trembling arms, and the mother smiled, and allowed me to take the child. She told me when her little girl was born. I do not know the date of the birth of my own darling, but it must have been at about the same time. Deep was my emotion as I nursed this little stranger, rocking to and fro, and trying to sing through my tears and anguish. The smiling face of the woman underwent a change; she regarded me seriously. Putting her hand on my arm, she said, "" You have been a mother."

"" A most unhappy mother," I said.
"" And your child?"

"'I looked down upon the earth; then upward through the open cottage window.

"" Poor child, poor child!" the woman murmured.

"'This note of sympathy was like the opening of heaven's gates to me. I had fallen very, very low; I was dishonored, disgraced; and when the bitter truth was revealed to me, I had courted a deeper degradation, seeking only a selfish oblivion of my first disgrace. I was young; in the course of nature, if I preserved my health, if I did not ruin my constitution by degrading habits, there might be a long life before me. For the first time since the day on which Clifford had made his shameful, his infamous confession, I was inspired by a sentiment higher than mere selfishness and despair. I would try to be good; yes, I would strive to overcome the fatal infatuation which was destroying me, body and soul. It seemed to me as if the babe in my arms was a shield protecting me from all evil, enabling me to defy the demoniac temptation so often whispered in my ear. This helpless babe was all powerful in its holy influence; I would cling to it, and it should save me from the pit. I begged to be allowed to nurse the child when it did not need its mother, and the woman said, certainly, she would be glad, it would be a help to her. I thanked her, and that was the first night for many, many months on which I can say I was happy.

"'Two days have passed since then, and I feel that I am among friends. The husband is a laborer in the fields; he goes out early and comes home late; and the wife has to work hard too. They do not grumble at the toil; they have just enough, no more, and they have been married

only two years. It is yet the summer of love.

"'Whoever says there is hope for those who have fallen lies. Whoever preaches salvation for lost souls, lies.

happy hours were few. Night has come again.
"'It was a fete day. In great cities people go into the country for their holiday. They work in close streets and

houses; fields and hedgerows are a paradise for them. But here on fete days they go to the wine-shops. What attraction can the fields they labor in from sunrise till sundown have for the toilers? None. Their paradise is the wine-shop.

"'So we all went; Gabrielle's sister, her husband and

little Julie, their child.

"'There was a fair close by with more wine-shops, and there we went later in the day. People were drinking all around me, and I touched nothing but water. It sickened me; it made me faint; but still I resisted, growing weaker and weaker, while the craving grew stronger and stronger. The faces of my friends were flushed, even the mother's face as she tossed her baby in the air. In fear lest the little one should fall and be injured, I took it from the mother's arms. She laughed, and said:

""Yes, you are right. But it is only for to-day. To-morrow we shall be ourselves again. Don't be afraid. This is not the first time, and I hope it will not be the last."

"'These words had a singular effect upon me. "It is not the first time, and I hope it will not be the last." She had no fear of herself, for she said, "Don't be afraid;"

and, "To-morrow we shall be ourselves again."

"'If they had such confidence in themselves, why not I? Surely I was as strong as they? "You are, you are," whispered the fiend. "Do not be shamed by them. You are town bred, educated, a lady; they are country clowns. See how merry they are. Follow their example and be happy."

"'I pressed my fingers to my ears; I talked loudly to little Julie, to drown the voice of the tempter; but it was like dust; it would not be denied. It whispered and whispered, drawing me on, maddening me. And still I

resisted.

"'We entered a booth, but I did not see the entertainment. I wanted neither to see nor to hear; all I wanted was little Julie, my shield, close, close to my breast. The show was over; we trooped out.

"" Come, Madame Straightlace," said little Julie's

father, "It is your turn to treat now. Look at my pockets."

"'He turned them inside out; they were empty.
"'"Yes, it is your turn, your turn," laughed his wife.
"'I offered him a few small pieces of money, but he cried-

"" No, no, I am not a beggar. We haven't come to that yet, wife."
""No, indeed," said she.

"" Show your friendliness," said the man, "and drink

with us. It is the only way."

"'In jovial mood they dragged me to the wine-shop. Had the fiend whispered to me at that moment I should not have fallen again, but the voice was silent, the tempter being as conscious as I was myself of the struggle going on within me. In desperation I threw money on the counter, and taking the glass Julie's father held towards me, drained it in a moment.

"" That's well done," said Julie's father, "as well as I could have done it myself. You brighten up at once; your eyes are dancing in your head. It is as it should be. This

is not the time for long faces. Here."

"'Another glass was held out to me, which I drained like the first. The lights, the people resembled fire-flies flitting all ways at once.
""" Where is my little Julie?" cried the man.

me my little Julie."

- "'He tried to take the child from my arms, but I held it tight. We had a struggle, on his side in fun and merriment, on mine more seriously, and he obtained possession of Julie. Thank God for that! She was not in my arms during what followed.
- "'Can I describe it? Suddenly, without warning, the air was filled with cries of terror. Some light material with which the wine shop was decorated took fire, and in a moment the place was in a blaze. The shrieks of women, the fighting for the doors, the beating down of the weak, the frenzied appeals and imprecations, were horrible. They ring in my ears now, those death shrieks; I see

women in flames struggling and leaping. These live in my

imagination; the reality was even more terrible.

"'The wine shop was burned to the ground, and some booths adjoining. The dead were carried out, and laid on the ground, their forms illumined by torches which men were holding. Among the dead were little Julie and her mother.

"'I fled. The forest was four miles from the spot, but I felt no fatigue till I reached it. There I sank upon the fallen leaves, and writhed in anguish. What hope was there in the world for me now? How I passed the night I know not. The sun rose upon a soul for ever lost. I cannot continue. . . . . .

\* \* \* \* \* \* \* \*

"'Once before when I was wandering in darkness, did Mary Sternhold come to me. I did not know then that it was she who called me sister, and would have wooed me to seek death in the quiet waters of the river. I know it now.

"'As on that occasion, there are shadows around and about me, dark shadows of despair, seeking rest. Will they ever find it? How long have they been wandering in their hopeless search? I ask the question aloud? I am answered.

"" They are not the same. Every day the sun sinks upon new recruits. The ranks are quickly filled."

"" Who are you?"

"" Mary Sternhold. I came once before."

"" I remember."

"" It was before your baby was born."

"" Alas, yes!"

"" Before your baby died?"

"" Do not torture me."

""I am here to bless, not to torture. I am here to give you peace."

"" Have you found it yourself?"

"" I have, and I bring it to others who fear the ordeal. Since I last spoke to you has happiness been your portion?"

"" Black misery has been my portion."

""Why, then, do you tarry? The sweetness of the world is not for such as you. It is folly to continue to suffer, when you have the remedy in your hands. Your youth is blighted; you will be old soon—long before your time—and you will sigh in vain for the blessing that now may be yours. You have sinned unconsciously. Beware lest you sin consciously. Look at me."

"'A star fell, and in the swift transient gleam I saw the form of Mary Sternhold. It was clad in white. Peace

shone upon her brow.

"" Look upon yourself."

"'Again a star fell, and I saw my form for one brief moment, a form to shudder at, to fly from. Torn garments; a haggard face; dishevelled hair; eyes of wild despair.

"" As you are, so should I have been, and worse, if I had cared to live. As you are, so should I have been, and worse, if I had refused the blessing I offer to you. Shall I show you what you will become if you are still obdurate?"
""No, no! I never heard of your end, Mary."

"" Nor any one else. I took care of that. Only God saw."

"" And was not angry?"

"" You have seen me; you have seen yourself. persuaded."

"" I am a coward. I do not dare."

"" Faint heart? There is one you do not think of."

" " Who ?"

"" Your baby. She is waiting for you. She will open her little arms for your embrace. She will hold up her sweet face for your kiss. You can meet her now, but not in the time to come. Low as you have sunk, the worst has not befallen; you may not escape from it if you live."

"'I held my breath. The river was singing its lullaby of peace, of love, of release from wretchedness and despair. Led by the spirit of Mary Sternhold I walked slowly on. The branches were bending, there was a soft rustle of jeaves, the air was charged with sobs.

"" You are sure God will not be angry?"

"" He will be pleased with you."

"" And my baby will welcome me?"

"" With gladness."

"'The water was before me. I raised my eyes to heaven. Of that sad night I remember nothing more. . . .

## CHAPTER XVIII.

"This," said Mr. Barlow, "is the last communication—the scraps cannot be called letters—Mrs. Kennedy received in the handwriting of Adeline Ducroz. Whether they were all that were written is hardly likely, considering the circumstances and the many years that have passed, to be ever known. My own opinion is that many must have miscarried—for this reason: nearly all that I have read was written at lucid intervals. There were periods, long or short, when the poor girl was not accountable for her actions, and during those periods I have no doubt she scribbled sometimes in secret. I would give something out of my own pocket to get hold of these portions of her confession which never reached their destination."

"For literary purposes?" I asked, and as I put the

question a suspicion crossed my mind.

"Yes," said Mr. Barlow, complacently, "for literary purposes."

"Look here, Barlow," I said, giving utterance to my suspicion, "these papers are genuine, I suppose?"

"What do you think?" asked Mr. Barlow in return, with an amused expression on his shrewd face.

"They are so extraordinary and unusual," I stam-

mered-

"Go on, Millington," said Mr. Barlow. "What are you stopping for? Say what is in your mind. They are so extraordinary and unusual."

"And in some parts," I continued, rather embarrassed,

"although I am not much of a judge, so poetical—"

"Go on, Millington, go on," said Mr. Barlow, encouragingly, "and in some parts so poetical——"

"That I shouldn't be surprised to hear that you had

made them up yourself."

"Much obliged to you for the compliment," said Mr. Barlow, "but your opinion of my powers is too high; it really is, Millington. If I were equal to such flights of the imagination I would throw up business to-morrow and start my literary career at once. The papers are genuine—one of the strangest chapters in real life I ever met with. What you say about their being poetical here and there is true; I was struck with it myself. It only shows what may be hidden in a person which, but for some crisis, might never come out. They say poets are mad; here is a proof of it. Now let us carry the story on."

He tied the papers carefully together, having previously

re-arranged them, put them aside and resumed:

"The receipt of these communications occasioned Mrs. Kennedy the greatest anxiety, but she had other anxieties of a strictly personal nature which prevented her from moving in the matter, even if she had possessed the means to do so, which she had not. At about that time her husband met with an accident which crippled him for life. She had not only to nurse him, but to attend to his business affairs, which otherwise would have fallen into ruinous confusion. Occupation enough for one woman. Her husband became a confirmed invalid, and for many years was confined to the house. Her first duty lay in their home, and she performed it bravely. The communications she had received from Adeline Ducroz ceased at a critical moment in the young girl's life. There is no room to doubt that, urged to the deed by a disordered imagination and by the desperate position to which she was driven, she attempted to commit suicide. How she was rescued, and what was her subsequent fate remained a mystery for several years, and when Mrs. Kennedy obtained a clue it was by one of those singular chances which I believe to be sufficiently common, though most people regard them as inexplicable and extraordinary. Some, indeed, go so far as to declare them to be

direct acts of Providence, which, between you and me, Millington, is sheer nonsense. Mr. Kennedy became so confirmed a hypochondriac that it was necessary he should have some one continually with him. 'It is impossible for you to attend to him yourself,' said the doctor; 'you must get a trained nurse.' And although Mrs. Kennedy was at first reluctant to give her husband into the care of a stranger she was compelled eventually to take the doctor's advice. She asked him to obtain a kind and experienced person for the duty, and in the course of a few days he sent her a Frenchwoman who could speak English well, and whose certificates and letters of recommendation were unexceptionable. The engagement was made, and, as you will see, led to an important result, apart from the service she was hired to perform."

"This woman," I said, "represents the singular chance

you spoke of?"

"She does," replied Mr. Barlow.

I jumped at a conclusion. "She was the woman who

acted as nurse to Adeline Ducroz in Paris."

"You have guessed it," said Mr. Barlow; "the identical woman. She was with Mrs. Kennedy a couple of months before the discovery was made. Mr. Kennedy's condition became so bad that he could not sleep, and opiates had to be administered to him. This sometimes sets the nurse free of an evening, at which times she and Mrs. Kennedy would keep each other company. Her name was Madame Pau. One night, when Mr. Kennedy was asleep, Madame Pau commenced to relate some of her professional experiences in Paris and elsewhere, mentioning no names. She had nursed all kinds of patients, and her anecdotal reminiscences were drawn principally from the humorous side of her occupation. Suddenly an idea occurred to Mrs. Kennedy. 'Were you in Paris in 1867?' she asked. 'And in 1868 as well, Madame,' replied Madame Pau. 'Following your occupation?' 'Yes, Madame.' 'At an institution?' 'No, Madame. I nursed patients at their private residences.' 'Is it possible, thought Mrs. Kennedy, 'that this can be the woman who nursed 'Adeline?' She asked the question

boldly, and, according to her account, the woman at first rather hesitated to reply. This hesitation strengthened Mrs. Kennedy's idea. She represented to the woman that she was deeply interested in the young lady to whom she referred, and after a little persuasion and the promise of a bribe, Madame Pau spoke freely. She had nursed Adeline Ducroz, and she knew more than Mrs. Kennedy suspected. What she subsequently revealed is set down in narrative form by Madame Pau, in French, and afterwards translated by Mrs. Kennedy. Here is the translation, in Mrs. Kennedy's writing. You will find it interesting. It opens up a new field of speculation, and throws a light upon Mr. Julius Clifford's character."

Selecting a paper from the documents near him Mr.

Barlow proceeded to read:

"The statement of Madame Pau, late of Paris, now of the United States of America, relating to the case of Madame Adeline Ducroz:

"I am not good at dates. Years I remember, but not months, or weeks, or days. It was in the year 1867 that I was engaged to nurse an English lady in Paris, Madame Adeline Ducroz, who was afflicted with the vice of many English ladies, a passion for drinking too much. Not wine. Spirits. I have nursed other patients, suffering from the same malady, and all of them, I am delighted to say, foreigners.

"Madame Ducroz expected to become a mother, which

was bad for her and for the unborn child.

"I am not good at names, as well as dates; I have had to do with so many. But I remember, in Paris, two names in this case. One is the name of the patient, Madame Ducroz, the other is the name of her gentleman friend, M. Julius Clifford. He was a compatriot of the lady, like her an English subject.

"She was an encumbrance to him. He told me she followed him about, and would not leave him. He was the victim, not she. But he wished to be kind to her—O, yes, he wished her to be happy. Not with him, with some

one else.

"'She is unreasonable,' he said to me. 'She is violent She lies when she speaks. She is under the delusion that I promised to marry her. It is too ridiculous. I am a gentleman, and she has only herself to blame.'

"I asked no questions. It was not for me to do so. It

"I asked no questions. It was not for me to do so. It was for me to perform the duties for which I was engaged. I performed them faithfully, and carried out my instruc-

tions.

"For instance:

"'She can have whatever she asks for. She loves to

drink. Indulge her. Here is money!'

"He was generous, M. Clifford, and rich. I say I performed my duties faithfully, but it did not belong to my duties to make her mad. She implored for drink. I would not give it to her, only a little by the doctor's instructions. It was the doctor's instructions I carried out. I forget the doctor's name.

"It is not for me to declare whether the gentleman spoke true or false in what he told me about his lady. I have my ideas, that is all.

"No, I would not give her brandy. She produced

money, and said:

"Madame Pau, Madame Pau, I am perishing, I am dying! Bring me one little bottle!"

"I refused. I would not.

"But there were others about her who did what I refused to do. Patients suffering from Madame Pau's malady are very cunning. She bribed servants to get her what she wanted, and I found the empty bottles about the room. She drank herself delirious. It was deplorable to see her. It made me weep.

"I spoke to her like a mother; I advised her for her good; she made promises; she did not keep them. It is a

mania; they have not the strength to resist.

"I informed M. Clifford. He said,

"'What can I do? She is not to be depended upon for one moment, not for one single moment. She deceives you as she deceived me. She is headstrong, she is ungovernable. It shall not be said I am not kind to her. Let her have all she wants.'

"I suggested that he should see and remonstrate with her. He would not. He had done with her, he said. So much money he would spend upon her; then he would shake himself free.

"He did not remain in Paris all the time. He went to England. And came back again. This happened three, four times. Once he said to me, with an air of gloom,

"'All this trouble would be over if she were not to re-

cover.

"The sentiment was disagreeable to me; I expressed myself. He replied,

"'Can I help it if she is well or ill? It is in her own

hands.'

"A child was born, a beautiful little girl. Madame Ducroz wept over her, caressed her, adored her. Sometimes she said,

"'She is my guardian angel.' Sometimes, 'She is my

"All this time we did not know whether she would get well or die. She had great strength, or she could not have lasted so long. To-day the doctor said one thing, to-morrow he said another. The child, too. Now she was well, now she was ill. M. Clifford made inquiries about her.

"'She is beautiful,' I said. 'She is adorable. Will you

not come and see her?"

"No, he would not, nor would he permit me to bring the infant to him. It came into my mind, 'Has M. Clifford a heart?'

"The child sickened; there was danger. Madame Ducroz was alarmed. She allowed herself to be persuaded. For the child's sake she would place herself in the care of a skilful man who kept an establishment for the cure of such as she. She signed a paper and was taken away.

"M. Clifford paid all the charges. If he did not have a

heart, he had a purse. He dismissed me, and paid me

liberally.

"'Have I not done everything in my power?' he asked. "'Everything, monsieur,' I said.

"'Could any gentleman have done more?' he asked.

"'No, monsieur, no,' I said.

"'Speak always well of me,' he said.

"But I speak as I feel. From a little child I spoke always the truth. It is not always wise, I know it but when one has a conscience one does not stop to consider.

"It is your wish that I should say something of Madame Ducroz's nature. There was good in it, much good, but she had no control. She was affectionate, she was passionate. She spoke softly, she spoke loudly. She could caress, she could scratch. Am I condemning her? No, a thousand times no. Women are not little kittens. They have reason, they have sensibility, they have feelings. Do all gentlemen think so? No. They do us not justice; but

they are stronger than we.

"M. Clifford told me one story; Madame Ducroz told me another. Which was I to believe? Or, was it necessary for me to believe one or the other? I was not their judge; I was a nurse engaged for certain duties; but both showed anxiety that I should pronounce judgment. It was not for me, no, it was not for me. To myself I said, 'It is not a new story. It will end like the others. M. Clifford will go back to society, Madame Ducroz will go back to society. They will meet, and shrug their shoulders or laugh in each other's face. There is a song: 'We loved, we parted. You were all to me, you are nothing to me.' We Frenchwomen have sentiment, but some of us learn to know the world. It is seldom that Englishwomen do.

"The judgment I formed of the end of the story was

wrong. It was, after all, different from the others.

"Madame Ducroz has feelings. They were outraged. She said to M. Clifford, before I was engaged to attend her, that she would be revenged, that she would revenge herself. She repeated this in her delirium. That was his fear. M. Clifford was very proud, and he was a coward. I do not blame him. I do not blame her. It is well that some false lovers should be made to shake in their shoes, should be made to suffer. When a woman takes the law in her own hands, it is bad for the man. M. Clifford knew this. He had read our newspapers, and Madame Ducroz not being a little kitten, he was afraid of her.

"I bade M. Clifford adieu, and I saw him no more for three years. I will not be exact; it may be more, it may be less. I have only my memory, and it is not always good. But three years will do.

"I met him in Paris. He looked at me, colored, and went on. My way was his; I followed him because of

that. I could not help thinking of Madame Ducroz.

"He turned, fixed his eyes upon me, drew himself up proudly.

"'Why do you follow me?' he asked.

"'Monsieur is mistaken,' I said. 'It is the road I am

going.'

"He did not believe me. There are gentlemen who tell you so without speaking, who are suspicious of everything

and everybody. M. Clifford is one.
"'Say what you have to say,' he said, 'and begone.' But though he spoke haughtily he took out his purse. He was more eloquent and gracious with his money than with his tongue.

"'As monsieur permits me to speak,' I said, 'I may be

allowed to inquire after the welfare of Madame Ducroz.'

"'She is dead,' he said.

"'Alas!' I cried. 'Poor lady, to die so young!'

"'Do not make me a scene in the street,' he said, and he looked around in fear that anybody should hear, and put some money into my hand.

"'And the child, monsieur?' I asked, after I had

thanked him. 'The sweet infant?'

"'Is dead,' he replied. 'That is all you want to know?'

"'It is all, monsieur,' I said.

"'Oblige me,' he said, 'if you meet me again, in Paris or elsewhere, by regarding me as a stranger. You have been paid for the services you rendered.'

"He called a carriage, and drove away.

"'Monsieur Clifford,' I thought, as I walked on, 'is out of his trouble. What he wished for has happened.'

"It made me sad, the end of Madame Ducroz and her

sweet child, both so beautiful and unfortunate.

"It was perhaps one year, it was perhaps two years after

this meeting with M. Clifford in the streets of Paris that I was engaged as nurse in the south of France. It was a hard case. For two months I was confined to the house, day and night, and when my service was terminated I gave myself a holiday before returning to Paris. I travelled and enjoyed myself, having saved a little money.

"I arrived at a town near the sea. The day was Sunday, and all the people were in the sunshine, and again in the evening when the stars were out. A poor woman, almost in rags, passed me, walking unsteadily. I just saw her face, and I ran after her, in amazement. Was it the ghost of

Madame Ducroz I had seen?

"I seized her arm; I looked at her more closely. She moaned.

"'Let me go. I have done no harm?'

"I should have doubted my senses if I had not heard her voice. Even then I could not be sure. Had not M. Clifford told me that Madame Ducroz was dead? Wherefore the lie if this poor woman writhing in my arms was she?

"Her face was changed, but still beautiful. I describe her rags, her condition in one word—destitution. But still another word—misery.

"'Madame Ducroz!' I said to her, in a low voice.

"She looked at me, trembled, and made no resistance.

"Again I said, 'Madame Ducroz!'

"All she said was, 'It is my name. Be satisfied, and let me go. I have done no harm!'

"'Do you not remember me?' I said. 'The woman who

nursed you in Paris when your baby was born?'

"'My baby!' she moaned. 'I am seeking her. Do not detain me. I must find her, I must find her.' Listen. You

will hear her calling to me!'

"I heard no voice. But I saw what filled my heart with pity. A poor crazed sister in want and misery. I slipped a franc into her hand. Her fingers tightened upon it. She laughed—the laugh of one who was not in her right mind.

"Suddenly she cried, 'Look behind you!'

"I loosened my grasp, and looked as she bade me. In my amazement I thought a spirit might be standing at my elbow, but I was startled by no such vision. Turning to Madame Ducroz, I found she had vanished. She had tricked me to escape. A shadow could not have glided away more

enoiselessly.

"I sought her till near midnight, but saw nothing of her. I asked questions of people who could not give me satisfactory answers. Had it not been that I held her in my arms and my franc was gone, I should have believed that I was dreaming. But it was not a dream; I am ready to swear it. I never saw Madame Ducroz again, nor have I heard anything of her. This is a true statement.

"(Signed) MATHILDE PAU."

## CHAPTER XIX.

"MADAME PAU," said Mr. Barlow, "took genuine pleasure in putting her statement in dramatic form, after the fashion of her countrywomen. That, however, is not the cause of part of her statement being false and part of it true. Her desire was to place herself in an entirely favorable light. As to her description of her treatment of Adeline Ducroz in Paris she has been very careful to wash herself white. The truth of those wretched weeks is told in the communications to Mrs. Kennedy received from Ducroz. Mrs. Kennedy believes this; so do I. There is a serious discrepancy in the two versions, and it is this that leads me to doubt Madame Pau's veracity when she speaks of the conversations between her and Mr. Clifford. Sifting the statement carefully, I come to these conclusions. Madame Pau being nurse to Miss Ducroz: true. Her refusal to obtain drink for her patient: false. Her conversations and interviews with Mr. Clifford during the time she was nursing Miss Ducroz: highly colored, or entirely false. Hermeeting Mr. Clifford accidentally in Parissomethree years afterwards: true. Her meeting Miss Ducroz in the South

of France a year or two after that: true in the main. Her bestowal of charity: a fiction. The important feature in the statement is the establishment of the fact that Miss Ducroz was living some years after she ceased corresponding with Mrs. Kennedy, and there appears to be little doubt that she was living in misery and destitution. Now, it is my opinion, and Mrs. Kennedy is even stronger in this belief than myself, that the child—a girl, remember—also lived, and that the fiction of its being dead was invented for the purpose of putting an end to the trouble between Mr. Clifford and the poor lady he betrayed. Living, and acknowledged, she might have been used as a thorn in his side. Much more convenient to have her taken away and brought up under another name, and after a time perhaps lost sight of altogether. But this could not have been done without accomplices, and the question is who were these accomplices and the precise parts they played in the drama. I will finish with Mrs. Kennedy up to period of her departure from the United States. The statement made by Madame Pau inspired Mrs. Kennedy with such distrust of the woman that she was seriously considering whether she should dispense with her services and obtain another nurse for her husband, when an event occurred which saved her the trouble of definite action. Mr. Kennedy died, and Mrs. Kennedy was alone. Reflection convinced her that it would serve no good end to make an enemy of Madame Pau, or to challenge her veracity. Far better to part friends. If she had concealed or injuriously misrepresented anything, the truth, supposing it could not be established by other means, might, through her cupidity, be extracted from her in the future; for almost immediately upon her husband's death Mrs. Kennedy had resolved upon a certain course of action. She was comparatively a rich woman; her husband's property had increased greatly in value, and advantageous offers were made to her for its purchase. There was nothing to detain her in America; the lonely life before her was not a tempting prospect; and what she had learned from Madame Pau revived her interest in her adopted daughter. She burnt with indigna-

tion against Mr. Clifford and she was impressed with the conviction that both Adeline Ducroz and the child were still living. What more righteous task could she set herself than to come back to England, after the realization of her property and endeavor to find them? She had no object in life; here was one to her hand; and if, in the carrying of it out she could punish Mr. Clifford for the foul wrong he had perpetrated, all the greater would be her satisfaction. Now you know who my client is."
"Mrs. Kennedy herself," I said.

"Exactly. Mrs. Kennedy herself."

"Has she accomplished the first part of her task? Is

Miss Ducroz living, and has she discovered her?"

"At the present moment," said Mr. Barlow, "I am not at liberty to answer both of your questions. The first I can. Miss Ducroz lives."

"That will be news for Mr. Haldane," I said. "I suppose

I may make use of it."

"I see no objection. And now, Millington, take this into consideration; you have been so interested in the unwinding of the story that I shouldn't wonder if it has escaped you. Miss Ducroz is in the land of the living, and also, for a certainty, Mr. Julius Clifford. That being the case, are they or are they not man and wife according to the law of this country?"

I gave a long, low whistle, and said, "It certainly

escaped me."

"It opens up issues, you see. There may be grave consequences hanging to it. I have stated my opinion, that Mr Haldane and Mr. Clifford are one and the same person. I want this proved, and proved soon."

"How can it be done?"

"It is a simple matter. Rachel Diprose, your son's

sweetheart is Miss Haldane's confidential maid—"

"Good God!" I cried, starting up in excitement at the mention of Miss Haldane's name, and at the thought that she would be involved in her father's exposure and disgrace. That I should be instrumental in bringing shame upon one so sweet and charitable presented itself to me as indescribably

base and treacherous. Then, there was my boy, George. His happiness might be wrecked through me, for Rachel Diprose would be sure to take her young lady's side, and would look upon me and all belonging to me with abhorrence.

"Don't lose your head, Millington," said Mr. Barlow. "I know what you're thinking of, but you're wrong, my lad. Make up your mind to more than one thing. First, that this affair's got to be carried through. Second, that I'd have carried it through to a certainty if you hadn't been in it. It might have taken me a week longer, but that's the extent. I'm a clumsy dog at a scent, aren't I? Did you ever know me beaten yet? Third, that being in it, you can act the part of a friend to those you care for, and soften the blow that's got to fall on tender shoulders. I'm talking sense, Millington, my lad. If I hadn't taken on my commission, and you hadn't taken on yours, they'd have drifted into worse hands than ours. And we can always throw up if we want to; but it won't be so good for the other partiesremember that. Now are you steady? Shall I go on?"

"Yes," I said.

"Right you are. To commence again. Rachel Diprose, your son's sweetheart, is Miss Haldane's confidential maid. It's ten to one she's got an album, and it's longer odds that there's a portrait of George in it, and two or three of herself, and portraits of lots of her relations, near and distant, from babies in little skirts holding on to their fat little toes to grandfather and grandmother, who'd like to be their own grand-children and commence life all over again. I want the loan of that album for just one day. You write to her for it, and say you're going to send her in its place a spick and span new one, with gilt edges, bound in morocco, to commence housekeeping with. She'll pack it up instanter, and you'll receive it by following post."

"What will you do with it when you've got it?"

"That's my business, and it's my business to give it you back the day after you hand it to me, without a picture missing, and in company of that spick and span new album I've spoken of. Will you do as much for me?"
"Yes, I will," I replied.

"Write to-night," said Mr. Barlow. "Instead of returning the album through the post you can take it back, when you go to Chudleigh Park to give Mr. Haldane some information about Adeline Ducroz that will interest him. I should advise you to wait three or four days before you do this; it will be time enough. There are just one or two things left to say that we may as well get through. When Mr. Haldane came to us years ago about some threatening letters he, or a friend of his, had received, he paid, through us, a fairish sum of money to hush up a matter he kept to himself. What occurs to me now is that that matter had some connection with the commissions upon which you and I are at present engaged. If so, the party who threatened him or his friend must have been an agent employed by Mr. Clifford at the time Adeline Ducroz was in Paris. looks remarkably like a conspiracy, and something more may come out of it. Then, again, I made a remark to you last night about Miss Haldane's age. Eighteen, you said?"

"I asked George this morning, and he said that is her

age. He knows it through his sweetheart."

"That," remarked Mr. Barlow, "would be the age of Adeline Ducroz's daughter if she were alive this day. Upon your next visit to Chudleigh Park you might have a chat with some of the villagers, and learn from them when Mrs. Haldane was married, and how long ago it is since she died. They are sure to know all about a domestic affair of that kind." Mr. Barlow looked at his watch. "It's past six. Come home with me and have a cup of tea. Mrs. Barlow will be glad to see you. George won't expect you home before eight, and you can get back by that time."

George opened the door for me in his shirt sleeves. That son of mine never had an idle hour. He had turned a room in the house into a workshop, and there, when he had nothing else to claim his attention, he was always to be found, making all sorts of things for future housekeeping with which he intended one day to surprise his Rachel. He had just put the finishing touches to a work-table for his little wife that was to be with drawers and flaps, and

receptacles for everything a woman needed in the way of needlework. I don't know how many weeks he had been employed upon this table in his leisure time, and it was a pleasure to see the pride he took in it, and to see him handle it as if it were a living thing, with sense and feeling. In his workshop were a number of other useful and ornamental articles, brackets, small cupboards to hang on the walls, a corner cabinet, fitted with glass and shelves, and I don't know what all.

"It's the next best thing to having Rachel with me," he said, "working for her and thinking of her. Have you

heard any news of that Honoria girl?"

"None, George."

He laughed when I told him I was going to write to Rachel to send me her album, and that Mr. Barlow intended to present her with a new one.

"She'll wonder what you want it for," he said. "The new one will come in handy for the house. Every little

helps."

In due time the album arrived, with a pretty note from Rachel, saying she supposed I wanted to make the acquaint-ance of all her relations before she and George came together. She enclosed a list of the portraits, with the family names and ages, nephews, nieces, aunts and uncles, and grand-mothers and grandfathers, just as Mr. Barlow had said there would be.

"Take the greatest care of it," said Rachel in her note. "There are portraits in it I wouldn't lose for the world."

"That is one of them," said George, as we looked at the portrait of Rachel's young mistress. "Next to Rachel's it is the sweetest face I have ever seen."

## CHAPTER XX.

I GAVE the album to Mr. Barlow, and the following day he returned it to me in company with a new album, much

handsomer than I expected he would purchase, requesting me to forward it on to Rachel Diprose, with all kinds of good wishes and a hope that he would soon have the pleasure of making her acquaintance.

"As I have obliged you, Barlow," I said, "perhaps you will oblige me now by telling me what you wanted the

album for."

He cocked his eye at me knowingly. "You don't mean to say you don't know, Millington?"

"I don't," I replied.

"You've grown stale," he said, "out of training. Well, you're none the worse for it. When I asked for the loan of this album I guessed that there would be other portraits in it than the portraits of pretty Rachel's relations. As a confidential servant she would be presented, from time to time, with portraits of her fellow-servants at the hall, and very likely, as a mark of approval, with the likenesses of the family she is living with. Such as the likeness of Miss Haldane, whose Christian name you said was—"

"Agnes."

"Exactly. Agnes. This is the young lady, isn't it?"

"Yes, that is Miss Haldane's portrait."

"To judge by her looks, a born lady. But looks are deceptive. Then I reckoned upon finding the likeness of Mr. Haldane; and here it is, if I don't mistake."

I had not given him the list which Rachel had sent me; he had to guess at the pictures, and had done so cor-

rectly.

"That is Mr. Haldane's portrait," I said.

"After we joined forces, Millington," continued Mr. Barlow, "and I had heard what you had to disclose, and you had heard what I had to disclose, there seemed to me to be one point it was necessary to establish without delay, and that was whether Mr. Haldane and Mr. Julius Clifford were one and the same person. I had my suspicions, and I made no secret of them to you, but said I to myself, 'Best make sure, Barlow.' So I carefully removed from the album the likenesses of Mr. and Miss Haldane, and mixing them up with a hundred others, took them to my client in

a loose heap. 'Look through these likenesses,' I said to her, 'and see if there is anybody you know among them.'" I interrupted Mr. Barlow by asking whether he thought

I interrupted Mr. Barlow by asking whether he thought it was quite fair to use Rachel's album for such a purpose, and whether it was not very much like setting a trap for the girl—making her, as it were, an accomplice with us

against the family she was serving?"

"Don't worry about that," he said. "Rachel will never know anything about it unless you tell her. In my opinion it is quite fair; and as to setting a trap for her, that is all nonsense. I provided a safeguard. My client was about to look through the likenesses when I laid my hand on them. 'I am compelled,' I said to her, 'to make one stipulation. Some of these likenesses don't belong to me, and have been lent to me by a person you are not acquainted with. You must promise if you recognize any of them not to ask me where I obtained them.' Does that satisfy you, Millington?"

"I suppose it must," I replied, "the mischief being

done."

To speak the honest truth, I was in a nervous state to hear the end of his manoeuvre.

"My client gave me the promise, and then proceeded to examine the pictures. She tossed one after another aside, came to the likeness of Mr. Haldane, and stopped at once. She changed color, and in other ways was visibly agitated. 'When and where was this likeness taken?' she asked, 'I don't know,' I answered, and I told her there and then that I was not at liberty to answer any questions concerning it. 'But,' said she, 'you are acting as my paid agent to discover Mr. Julius Clifford for me.' I admitted it. 'This,' she said, pointing to Mr. Haldane's likeness, 'is the likeness of the villain we are searching for.' 'Oblige me,' I said, 'by looking through the other pictures and telling me whether you recognize any one else.' She examined them all carefully, paused half a moment when she came to Miss Haldane's likeness, put it with the others, and finished her task. Mr. Haldane's likeness was the only one she recognized. I pressed her closely about it, and asked her if she was sure that she was not mistaken. 'I will swear to the likeness,' she said. I tied all the portraits together and took possession of them. 'You must leave the case entirely in my hands,' I said, 'if you continue to employ me. You can see that I have not been idle, and that I am making progress, but as regards these portraits, I am not exactly a free agent.' She pressed me then harder than I had pressed her, but I stood my ground, and would give her no further satisfaction, saying that she must trust me entirely, or not at all. After a long discussion she gave way, and said she hoped I would deal honestly by her. And that is how the matter stands at present. Beyond all doubt, Mr. Haldane is the man who betrayed Adeline Ducroz. The question is now, what are we going to do?"

I could not answer him; I had come to a knot, and could not untie it. When I joined forces with Mr. Barlow, I had no idea that it would lead so straight to what was now disclosed. Mr. Barlow's client hoped that he would deal honestly by her; Mr. Haldane certainly hoped that I would deal honestly by him. When I undertook his commission, it was my intention to do so; otherwise I should have thrown it up without hesitation; but in the light of the strange disclosures that had been made, could I continue to do so? This was the perplexing phase of the matter which came slowly to my mind during the silence that ensued after Mr. Barlow's question.

"I wish to heaven," I said, fretfully and impatiently, "that Mr. Haldane had never written to me to come to

Chudleigh Park."

"What is done," observed Mr. Barlow, with cheap

wisdom, "can't be undone."

"Not much comfort in that," I said, not over amiably. I was vexed with myself, vexed with him, vexed with all

the world. "Nor is it a very original remark."

"Admitted," said Mr. Barlow, whose self-possession seldom deserted him, "but it is not to be despised because of its want of originality. It is a rare gift, Millington, originality, and I don't lay claim to it. Things run pretty

much in grooves, as at this very moment with you and me."
"Don't be mysterious, Barlow," I said, quite disposed to
lash myself into conspicuous ill-humor. "Never in my life have I been mixed up in such an affair as this. Why on earth did I allow myself to be dragged into it? If it

wasn't for George "---

"Exactly," said Mr. Barlow. "If it wasn't for George. It was in the first instance your affection for that good fellow that led you into it. But many a man starts on a journey, and pulls up on the road, resolving to turn back. I will explain what I meant when I said that things with you and me are running in the same groove. Neither of us anticipated the discoveries that have been made, and it is as clear to me as it is to you that we cannot go on working together. The interests involved are too conflicting. Between your client and mine exists a deadly enmity, and, as honest men, we cannot serve them both. One of us must resign. Which one?"

I was immensely relieved; he had shown me the way

out of my difficulty. "Let it be me," I said.

Mr. Barlow concurred. "I should have suggested it if you hadn't. You see, old friend, I took the business up because I happen to be in the business; you took it up because you had a personal interest in it, the sweethearting of George and Rachel. Go to Chudleigh Park, and make Mr. Haldane acquainted with what you know, through me, of Adeline Ducroz. Say that you learnt the particulars through a third party, and if he presses you to name this third party put it on to me to answer him. You will have a difficult conversation with him, according to my reckoning; he will want to know more than you are warranted to disclose, but you will judge how far you ought to go in the way of satisfying him. How does this strike you?"

"It is all right, and, Barlow, it is a wonderful relief to me. I am not fit for business any longer; I have grown too fond of my ease, of my idle life, of my pipe, and my birds, and my garden."

"Happy man!" said Mr. Barlow, contemplatively.

look forward to the time when I shall enjoy the same, with the addition of pen, ink, and paper, to immortalize my name. Now go and get rid of your burden."

"There is just one thing I would ask," I said.

"Although I have done with the affair I cannot cease to have an interest in it. Let me know from time to time how you get along."

"In confidence," said Mr. Barlow, "I will keep nothing from you. And if you find Honoria I shall be glad if you

will reciprocate."

"Confidence for confidence," I said, gaily; with the weight off my shoulders I really felt quite young; "every bit of information that comes to me shall be at your disposal. Good day, old fellow."

"Good day," said Mr. Barlow. "Love to George and

Rachel."

When I got into the streets, I walked along briskly, humming a favorite air; I seemed to have got rid of the nightmare. My days were once more my own, or would be after my interview with Mr. John Haldane, for whom, knowing him now to be Julius Clifford, I would not have continued to work for any consideration. But had it not been for the prompt suggestion of Mr. Barlow, I might have taken a longer time to make up my mind. I was thankful indeed that he had decided for me so quickly. When I reached home I wrote a note to Mr. Haldane, intimating that he might expect to see me at the Hall to-morrow after noon, and my letter being posted I lit my pipe, and cleaned the cages of my birds, who had grown accustomed to tobacco smoke, and gave them a treat in the shape of a bit of fresh grounsel. Buying this of a wobegone individual, with wild eyes, stubbly face, clothes in rags, and naked feet, caused me to reflect that of all the miserable wretches on the face of the earth, the men who sell grounsel are the most wretched. I asked myself the reason why, and was not discomposed because I could not find an answer. The reflection, and the question, and the attending to my birds, and the undisturbed pipe I was enjoying, convinced me that I had beaten a healthy retreat to pleasanter roads than I had been travelling since my first arrival at Chudleigh Park. The only comfort that visit had brought me was that I had made the acqaintance of Rachel Diprose, and had satisfied myself that she would make George a good wife. "I'll pay for a peal of bells," thought I as I went to bed, "when the wedding comes off."

## CHAPTER XXI.

THE landlord of the "Brindled Cow" was overjoyed, or

pretended to be, at seeing me.

"You're just like an old friend," said he, "and you're going to be treated like one whenever you put up at the 'Brindled Cow.'"

This meant probably a slight increase in his charges, but I met his cordiality in reciprocal fashion, and said that of all the country places I had ever visited Chudleigh was the pleasantest, and of all the hotels in which I had eaten

and slept the "Brindled Cow" ranked A No. 1.

"It's got a name, has the 'Brindled Cow,' said the landlord, and I'll defy you or any other man to find a better, or a jucier, or a better-cooked joint than you'll always find on my table. Vegetables fresh cut for dinner out of my own garden; fruit likewise; and tastier cucumbers you'll not meet with than my frame grows. To say nothing," he added, "of my wine-cellar."

I acquiesced without any display of hypocrisy, for, though but a poor judge of wine, his was certainly the best

I had ever drank.

"To say nothing," I repeated after him, "of the wine-cellar," intending the repetition as a mark of appreciation, in which sense he accepted it.

"Would you believe," he said, "that in my wine-cellar there's wine bought by my father when he was a young

man?'

"You don't say so?" I exclaimed.

"I do. There's port, and Maderia, and sherry, that

thick with cobwebs and fungus that it seems a sacrilege to touch the bottles. It's only done on rare occasions. There are two or three committees that come down regularly so many times a year to dine with me, and they order beforehand the best I've got. Some of them are old men who knew my father, and remember when some of the wine was bought, and by the way they lift the bottles and look at them and handle them you'd think they were pet children they can't make enough of. I never touch a glass myself at my own expense, but they always call me in to drink their healths, and when they're here I look forward to it."

"They have to pay something for that wine," I remarked.

"As a matter of course," said the landlord. "It goes up every year. If you put by money, you get interest; likewise with wine. When they call for the bill I point it out to them. Do they grumble? Not a bit. 'It's nothing but what's right, landlord,' they say. 'We're glad to pay the extra; glad to be here to pay it.' Why are they glad? I ask you, Mr. Millington, why are they glad? Ah, you haven't got an answer handy. I'll tell you. Because it doesn't come out of their pockets. They're on road committees and railway committees, and they get so many guineas a day when they come to inspect and inquire and report, and all expenses paid. Some of us would like to be on that job, wouldn't we? It isn't much they inspect, and it isn't much they inquire, but I've heard tell that their reports cover any number of pages. It would be dry work if wasn't for my cellar."

"A good listener is always sure of favor from the man who talks, and I was no exception to the rule, the landlord regarding me with fervor, tinged, no doubt, with calculation as to how much he would make out of me. I enquired after Simpson, and was informed that he was in London. This rather roused my curiosity, as Simpson had pledged himself to spend an evening with me there on the first opportunity. However, I did not mention this to the landlord, but said a few words to the effect that Simpson was a

bustling, pushing man who seemed to know his way about.
"You may say that," assented the landlord. "If he doesn't know the ropes I should like to see the man who does."

Having arranged to dine at the "Brindled Cow," and sleep there that night, I proceeded to the Hall. There I received the news that Mr. Haldane was also in London, which accounted for Simpson's absence from Chudleigh. As I was making my inquiry and listening to the answer a solemn-looking individual presented himself, who I was afterwards informed was the house steward. He asked my business and name, and upon my informing him that I had written to Mr. Haldane and had come down on purpose to see him, said that he was instructed to request me, in case I arrived at the Hall while Mr. Haldane was away, to remain in Chudleigh until Mr, Haldane returned or communicated with me. I had no objection; I wanted to get the business over as soon as possible, and not have the trouble of another journey to Chudleigh Park. Before leaving the Hall I contrived to see Rachel, whose manner was not as sparkling as usual, although she received me with affection.

"I have brought your album back," I said, "and the new one, a present from a friend. It is at the Brindled Cow.' Perhaps you will come and fetch it this evening;

then we can have a chat."

"Yes, I will," said Rachel, "but I thought it was you who was going to make me a present of the new album."

"A friend was with me when it arrived," I replied evasively, "and he asked me to let him buy it instead of me."

"Is he George's friend as well as yours?" asked Rachel.

"Yes; he has known George since he was a child, and he wants to know George's sweetheart, and to slip into her good graces."

This satisfied Rachel, and she said nothing more on the

subject.

"My young lady would like to see you, I think," she

said. "I will run up and ask her."

She left me and returned with the message that Miss Haldane would be pleased to see me. Upon entering the

young lady's room I noticed, also, a change in her manner! there was trouble in her face, and I was sorry to see it. My present visit to the Hall had occupied only a few minutes, but there seemed to be a change in the whole air of the place. It was all life and animation on my previous visits, but now the light appeared to have died out of it. "After all," thought I, thinking of my own little home in Shepherd's Bush, "give me a cozy snuggery, with a few rooms in it, for real happiness and comfort. If I had to live in a great mansion like this I should feel like a man in a wilderness." I kept my thoughts to myself, and Miss Haldane kept hers; none the less did I sympathize with her.

"I was going to write to you, Mr. Millington," she said, and I am glad you have come. Can you tell me anything about Honoria?"

"No," I replied. "I have seen and heard nothing of her. London is a vast city, Miss Haldane; one may easily

lose oneself there."

"I am greatly distressed about her," said Miss Haldane.
'She sent me a strange letter the day before yesterday, and I am afraid to think what will become of her, without a home or friends. Here is what she wrote. I cannot understand it."

She gave me the letter, and I was surprised at the elegance of the writing. It ran as follows:

"My dear Benefactress,—It would add to my misery if you were to believe that I am ungrateful or unmindful of all you have done for me. and I write to beg that you will not think it is so. As long as I live I shall hold you in grateful remembrance. I have given you a base return for your kindness; had I been what you wished me to be, a good woman, I could never have repaid you. How much less can I ever hope now to do so, being what I am? You will never hear from me again. Forget me. I am not worthy to live in your remembrance. But it may happily be that I can put you on your guard against one who, I understand, is received in your father's house as a friend.

He was there on your birthday, and on the day I came back to the village, and was hunted out of it, His name is Austin. Believe not a word he says. If he is already your friend, let him no longer be so. He is utterly false and black-hearted. I, who know him too well, tell you so solemnly, and I swear to God I speak the truth. Farewell for ever.—HONORIA."

In silence I read the letter; in silence I returned it.

"I can hardly hope," said Miss Haldane, sadly, "that you can give me any clue to this mystery, as it was only on my birthday you first came to Chudleigh. May I ask if Honoria said anything of this to you?"

"She said nothing of it to me," I replied.

It was a truthful answer, but I was guiltily conscious

that I was practising deception. The conversation we were having was a private one, Miss Haldane having sent Rachel from the room before she gave me the letter to read. But how dare I, a man of the world, reveal to this

pure creature the deplorable story of Honoria's fall?

"I am acquainted with no gentleman," continued Miss Haldane, "of the name of Austin, and he is not received in my father's house as a friend. Poor Honoria must be laboring under some delusion? I am so young and inexperienced, Mr. Millington, that I am at a loss for words to express myself, scarcely knowing, indeed, what it is I wish to express. I should not have the courage to speak to

anyone else as I am speaking to you."

I said I was honored by her confidence in me, and that I would endeavor to prove worthy of it—feeling all the time I spoke, that, in a certain sense, I was playing a treacherous part towards her. In truth, the conflicting views that presented themselves to me confused and bewildered me, man of the world as I was. One of these views was, whether it was not my duty, knowing that her friend and her father's friend, Mr. Louis Redwood, was at the same time the villain Austin who had brought Honoria to shame, to acquaint her with this fact? Honoria wished to put her benefactress on her guard; she had failed. I

could do so with better effect. Should I shirk the duty? It might be that the saving or the ruin of an innocent and confiding girl's happiness was in my hands. Certain it was that at that moment I was the only person, apart from the villain himself, who was in possession of his infamous secret. Straight upon these considerations, upon which it was impossible for me to come to a swift decision, flashed the open question whether the young lady in whose presence I stood was the daughter of Adeline Ducroz, whom the hapless mother believed to be dead. For the time being I set all these matters aside; I would consider them later on. They needed steady reflection, a calm mind, a cool judgment; better to let them bide awhile.
"Mr. Millington," said Miss Haldane, "what chance is

there in London for a girl in poor Honoria's position?"

"She has received a good education, thanks to you," I replied, "writes a good hand, expresses herself well, and, properly dressed, presents more than a decent appearance. There are thousands of young girls in London earning a fair livelihood in a respectable way. I don't speak of the unfortunate needlewomen who have to slave half the night through for the barest pittance, and who are the bound

bondswomen of grasping sweaters."

"Grasping sweaters!" exclaimed Miss Haldane, in deep concern, as though I was introducing to her a species of unparalleled monsters. "What kind of creatures are

those?"

"Men," I said, warmly; it was a theme upon which I felt very strongly, "who grow rich by grinding their help-less creatures down and driving them to the thin line of starvation. I beg your pardon for mentioning them. young girl like Honoria is not likely to fall into their clutches. She has too much sense—"

"I hope so," said Miss Haldane, piteously, "with all my heart I hope so! I have always thought London a beautiful city, but as you speak of it, it is terrible, horrible! And my poor Honoria is there, alone! Mr. Millington, I

can hardly bear to think of it."

"Then don't think of it, Miss Haldane," I said.

ought to have known better than to distress you so. If Honoria likes, she is safe from the worst side of it. Haberdashers' shops, milliners' shops, and plenty of large warehouses are filled with girls earning enough to keep them. Better still, there are the post offices and the telegraph offices, always glad to get hold of a well-educated girl, who, once she gets a footing there, can earn good wages, and has only to respect herself to make others respect her. There are plenty of chances, Miss Haldane."

"You make me so much happier by speaking in that

way. Honoria is such a girl, I am sure she is."

"Then," I pursued, warming up to my theme, and carried away by my desire to lighten Miss Haldane's heart, "a bright, presentable, and clever girl, being in one of those situations, makes acquaintances who invite her home, and perhaps in one of those homes she makes arrangements to live, earning sufficient to pay for board and lodging and dress, and putting by a little in the post office savings bank. She meets a respectable young man who falls in love with her, and it happens over and over again that he is as agreeable to her as she is to him. The natural result follows. He proposes, she accepts, and they marry, and commence a new life which depends only upon themselves to turn out happily."

"Mr. Millington," said Miss Haldane sweetly, holding out her hand, "you have rendered me a great service. I am much easier in my mind about Honoria. Thank you,

thank you. I am very grateful to you."

"You humbug!" thought I as, the interview ended, I was walking though the lovely park to the "Brindled Cow."
"You wretched hypocrite, to buoy Miss Haldane up with hopes which you know well will never be realized. As if you had the least notion that any such happy future lies before Honoria. You could forecast what will become of her pretty accurately if you set your mind to it."

I did not set my mind to it, my thoughts running upon the past, and not upon the future. The singular resemblance between the lives of Adeline Ducroz and Honoria forced itself vividly upon me. Each had been betrayed and

deserted, and their betrayers had each played his part under a false name. Notwithstanding my determination to have no further business dealings with Mr. Haldane, I could not but take a deep interest in the ultimate issue of the base wrong he had perpetrated; but it suited me much better to be a looker-on in the game of cross purposes, the result of which it would take a wiser head than mine to foresee.

## CHAPTER XXII.

For the greater part of the year the village of Chudleigh, was a kind of Sleepy Hollow; it was only upon rare occasions that it woke up and exhibited symptoms of liveliness and hilarity. On my previous visits I had seen it in its latter aspect; on my present visit I saw it in its former.
It was evening. The cottage doors and windows were

closed, hermetically sealed as it were; there were no gossips about; on my walk back to the "Brindled Cow" I had seen but one man, and he seemed to walk with muffled feet. There was not a soul in the bar of the public-house; the tap room, with its bagatelle table was deserted; and the landlord, a married man with no children, and with a wife who spoke with bated breath, would have been doomed to a night of apathy and loneliness had it not been for my companionship. He accepted with avidity my invitation to dinner, and drank his own wine with appreciation. I was not sparing of it. Wine is a key that unlocks many a human safe, and it was effectual with the landlord of the "Brindled Cow," from whom I wished to extract certain information. I spoke of the village and of himself in connection with it, and he regaled me with personal details, which I listened to patiently in the expectation that they would lead to what I desired to learn from him. He had been born in the village, as his father and his grandfather had been His grandfather had never been out of it.

"Think of that," he said "A dozen miles from Chudleigh, and the world was a sealed book to him."

"Happy man!" I said.

"I don't agree with you," said the landlord. "A fellow might as well be like one of the toads I've read of that live shut up in a rock for a thousand years or more. What's the world for, I should like to know? What are foreign countries for? What are seas for? What are ships and railroads for?"

"Ah," said I, "there were no such things in your grand-father's days. He lived to a good old age, I'll be bound."

"He was a hundred years old on the day he died."

"There's an age for you," I said.

"What was the good of it to him?" retorted the landlord. "A hundred years in this dead and alive place? How would you like it?"

"Not at all," I answered frankly.

"Give me London," he said, emptying his glass in one gulp. It was his fashion of drinking; he raised the glass to his lips and poured the liquor down his throat. "Give me London."

He had an ambition to become the landlord of a public-house in the great city; but the way he spoke of it such a position was as high as any reasonable man could hope to obtain. I entered into his humor, and when he had exhausted his theme I turned the conversation in the direction of the family at the Hall.

"Can they say as much as you," I asked. "Are they

as old in the village as yourself?"

"Not by a long way," he replied. "The present estate was bought by Mr. Haldane's father. He can't go beyond that. I could go back a good many generations if there was anything to be gained by it."

"The estate," I remarked, "has a history apart from the

Haldane family."

"Rather. It dates centuries back. You may read all about it in the county book. Queen Elizabeth stopped there; they've got the bed she slept in. A very old family it was, gone to the dogs many a long year ago. Spent their acres right and left. Mr. Haldane's father was a contract man; made his fortune, bought the whole place up, stock

and block, and settled down there. They give themselves airs they're not entitled to."

"Good," thought I; "we are on the road."

"There's a many here," continued the landlord, "as look down on them as much as they look down on us; but they've got the upper hand. Old families are like old wine; there's a flavor about them, as a body may say, that's wanting in new bottles. The coat-of-arms made in bloody wars—that's the sort of thing all men must bow down to, whatever their politics."

"Was Mr. Haldane's father much liked?"

"So so," said the landlord. "He spent his money free, but we didn't see the color of it. It was spent upon himself and his family and the quality folk he entertained at the Hall. He didn't gain much by it. They wouldn't accept him at his own value, and then he got savage, and there was dull times here all the rest of his life."

"Did he have a large family?"

"Three sons and two daughters. They all died young except the present Mr. Haldane."

"That was the reason, perhaps, of his shutting himself

up?"

"It's a matter of opinion; we don't take it that way."

"And the father dying, the whole estate passed to the gentleman who now owns it?"

"That's so; but he died without a will."

"That's strange."

"The story goes that the son and the father weren't friendly for some years before the old gentleman's death. Would you think it, to look at him, that Mr. Haldane was much of a gay spark?"

"That I should not. He seems too serious and

grave."

"There's many a man," said the landlord, with sententious philosophy, "that carries two faces under one hat. That's my opinion of the master here. I've got my reasons for saying so. He's one man here, and another man there."

"Here in Chudleigh, do you mean, and there in London?"

"Here in Chudleigh, and there in the world in general, London being a goodish bit of the world, so far as pleasure goes."

"You surprise me," I said honestly. The worthy landlord was presenting a new view to me. "Mr. Haldane a

man of pleasure?"

"Don't you take things for granted," said the landlord, with an air of great wisdom. "You London chaps are smart folk, but you don't know everything. Why, there was a clergyman I heard of once who preached morality that made folk weep; and all the while he preached he was carrying on a gay racket in Paris that made his congregation's hair stand on end when they came to know of it. It's being found out that you've got to be aware of. I'm not preaching morals myself, you understand?"
"I understand," I said, receiving his commonplaces with

profound conviction, and as though I was in the presence

of a philosopher of rare originality."

"I'm no better than my neighbors, I dare say, and no worse. We're much of a muchness if the truth was told."

"You've learnt something, at all events, in this quiet

village."

"O, but I've been in London many a time; I go twice a year, and mean to keep it up. But we was speaking of old Mr. Haldane and the will he didn't leave behind him. The Mr. Haldane you know was a wild 'un in his young days, and I shouldn't like to take my oath that he's reformed. He kept his father going, I can tell you, with his wild doings and the money he spent. Right and left it went it's in the blood of the Haldane's, I believe, to be extravagant enough on their own pleasures. It's a selfish world. There were scenes between the father and son, sometimes here, sometimes in other parts. The young rake wasn't at home more than a month or two a year; he had game to fly elsewhere."

"It's wonderful," I said, "how these things reach your

"They did, somehow. Things float in the air, you know. Well, matters came to such a pass that the old gentleman swore that he would disinherit his son. He travelled back to the Hall in a towering rage, and sent for a lawyer to make a new will. Down came the lawyer with quills and parchment and blue bag; but he arrived too late. The old gentleman had worked himself up so that he fell in a fit, and died, after tearing up and burning the will he'd made in favor of his son. Little charred bits of it were found in his room. It didn't make any difference to the son. He was the lawful inheritor, and he stepped in and took possession."

"A change for the better you found it," I observed.

"Not at all; there was nothing to be thankful for. For a goodish time the new master didn't show up much at the Hall. He spent his money in foreign parts. He could do as he pleased, of course, but it didn't speak well for him that he held himself off so. From that day to this he's done nothing for the village to give it a spurt. If anything, it's duller and slower now than when I was a boy. No workshops, no manufactories, no anything, He won't allow a new cottage to be built, he's that masterful and that jealous of everything and everybody."

"There must have been gay doings at his wedding," I said, coming to the subject upon which I desired enlight-

enment.

"You're mistaken again. We knew nothing about his marriage from what took place here. We heard that he'd married in London, and we looked forward to a bit of festivity; but he took no more notice of us than if we were cattle. It was five years afterwards that he came back here, with his little daughter. His wife was dead, we was told, and not a man among us had ever set eyes on her. That wasn't a proper way to treat us, was it?"

"It was certainly not a way to win your affection. The

daughter you speak of is Miss Haldane."

"Yes, God bless her!" said the landlord, with a flash of enthusiasm. "She's as much like her father as chalk's like cheese; there's not a man or woman in the village who has an ill word for her, and who wouldn't be happy to do her a service. If she was the reigning lady things would be different from what they are."

## CHAPTER XXIII.

THE information imparted by the landlord did not assist me in coming to any definite conclusion as to whether Miss Haldane was or was not the daughter of Adeline Ducroz always supposing, of course, that the report of the child's death shortly after her birth, was false, which was an assumption at which Mr. Barlow's client appeared to have arrived. With a fair insight now into Mr. Haldane's character, I felt that he was quite capable of inventing a story of a marriage, and of returning home with a child whom he intended to be received as the child of that imaginary union. His motive for thus encumbering himself was not so clear, unless, indeed, at the root of a nature radically base there grew some tendrils of affection for a child of his blood. To enter, however, upon this road of conjecture, would profit me but little, and I turned from it at once, and applied myself to the task of extracting such scraps of further information from my companion as might chance to be of use to me. Did he know into what family Mr. Haldane had married, I asked. No, he replied, he did not, and what was more, he did not care; nor did any of the villagers, he added. Mr. Haldane had chosen to ignore them, and to treat them as though they were so much dirt. What interest, therefore, was it likely they would take in a domestic occurrence, even of that importance? This feeling, to my mind, was quite natural, but I was surprised that the landlord of the "Brindled Cow" should be so free in expressing it. It was true that he was in his cups, in which condition many men are apt to be indiscreet, and to commit themselves to disclosures and opinions which in their sober moments they would keep close. But my surprise lessened when I subsequently learned that the lease of the "Brindled Cow"—which, in common with all the other property in the village, belonged to Mr. Haldane-would run out in the course of a year, and that the landlord,

whose family had held it for generations, could obtain no satisfactory assurance of a renewal. In addition to which, as my companion boastfully remarked, he was by no means badly off, and could afford to snap his fingers at any man.

"If it wasn't for my wife," said the landlord, "I'd fling the lease in his face. But she's got no spirit; she's like my grandfather, and thinks that Chudleigh's the world. It's only a nutshell, I tell her, but she shakes her head and mourns. She'll get over it though, if we have to flit. Why, you'd hardly believe it, she's never been inside a theatre; she trembles at the very thought of one. That's what living in Chudleigh brings a body to; dries 'em up, sir, dries 'em up. Give me London, I say again, and I'll go on saying it till I get her there; and then, when she got over her first scare, she'll thank me for acting like a man."

"You said awhile ago," I said, after complimenting him upon his courage, "that Mr. Haldane was one man here and another man there. You referred to his young

days, I take it. He has sown his wild oats."

"Has he?" exclaimed the landlord. "I could tell a different tale if I'd a mind to. When the parson preaches about saints and sinners it would have a better application if he pointed his finger straight at Mr. Haldane. But they don't throw stones at the rich; it's the poor they hammer away at. What would the parson say, I wonder, if he saw the master, as I've seen him, on a racecourse, carrying on with painted ladies in a way a common man would be ashamed of! What would he say if-"

But whatever further revelations the landlord was about to make, they were, much to my vexation, cut short by the appearance of his wife, who, opening the door unceremoniously, stood there and beckoned to him. Otherwise she neither spoke nor moved; she simply beckoned to him. Thinking of the manner in which he had spoken of her as a woman of no spirit, and of my own experience of her as a soft-spoken creature who scarcely raised her voice above a whisper, I was curious to witness the result of this intrusion upon our privacy. Would the landlord storm and bluster, and peremptorily order her from the room? Would he regale her with a stern lecture upon her presumption in thus daring to break in upon us? Would he assert hisauthority as master of his house and as wearer of the breeches in a manner not to be mistaken? To my astonishment he did nothing for a minute or two but sit and stare at her, the while her forefinger calmly inviting him to the course she deemed prudent for him. There was no resisting the mandate. Rising, after a period of imbecile hesitation, he looked at me foolishly, and meekly followed his wife from the room, indicating to me unerringly that if ever the grey mare was the better horse within the walls of an Englishman's castle the animal reigned here within the walls of the "Brindled Cow."

The revelations, however, which the landlord had made of the ways and doings of Mr. Haldane, tantalizingly cut short as they were at the most interesting point, were sufficiently novel to occupy my attention, and to lead me to ponder upon the problem my companion had presenteda mental operation, the suspension of which was only caused by the arrival of Rachel Diprose from the Hall. Hailing her appearance as a welcome relief, and as a possible means of increasing my store of knowledge, I presented her first with the album which Mr. Barlow had bought for her. Gifts are always welcome to those who are not overburdened with them, and Rachel was profuse in her expressions of appreciation and in her admiration of the good taste which had guided the selection. We took a stroll in the village, I carrying the two albums, and afterwards walked leisurely to the Park, Rachel being good enough to observe that she felt as much at home with me as if she had known me for years and years.

"I am very pleased to hear it, my dear," I said.

Hitherto we had been conversing about George, and London, and the portraits of her immediate family in the album, no mention being made about the portraits of Mr. and Miss Haldane; and as Rachel did not broach the sub-

ject, I, as a fellow conspirator with Mr. Barlow, did not dream of doing so. Rachel had laughingly asked me whether I approved of the pictured presentments of her relations, and had then gone off in raptures of a baby niece, which I, as a prospective (and wishful to be) grandfather, regarded as a good and hopeful sign. These and other subjects of a close domestic nature being exhausted, I said—

"So you and your young mistress are alone at the

hall?"

"Yes," said Rachel, with a half sigh, "we are all alone." Interpreting the sign, and interpreting it wrongly, I said, "You find it dull, Rachel."

"Oh, no, not at all," she said promptly. "We are used

to being alone. Mr. Haldane often goes to London."

"How often, my dear?"

"Oh, over and over again. He spends more than half his time there."

"Taking Miss Haldane with him sometimes, I sup-

pose?"

"Oh, no, he never does that. He goes all by himself without any warning. And he often comes back that way."

"But he writes to his daughter beforehand saying that

he is coming home."

"He never does," and I judged from her voice that her master was not in favor with her.

"Miss Haldane has been in London, of course?"

"Twice, on a visit to friends."

"You did not go with her, Rachel?"

"No, I remained at the Hall."

"Mr. Haldane was with his daughter at the time of these visits, and he took her about to the theatres and exhibitions?"

"He did nothing of the kind. Both times when Miss Haldane was in London he was abroad, and kept there. She saw nothing of her father till they were both back at the Hall."

"But surely," I said, "Mr. Haldane going so often to

London, has a house there? He is rich enough to own one."

"He may be that, for all I know," replied Rachel, "but he hasn't any house that I know of. He stops at some hotel or other. Leastways, that is where Miss Haldane writes to him. I don't mind saying it to you, Mr. Millington, but if I was a young lady I shouldn't like to have such a father."

"Anything you say to me, my dear, is in confidence. I look upon you already as my daughter, and I hope you won't keep George waiting too long."

"You musn't press me," said Rachel, and her voice was at once firm and regretful. "I've told George my mind, and he's agreed to it. I'll never leave my mistress till she's happily married and settled."

"So George has told me, my dear, But, Rachel, con-

sider—never?"

"Never, Mr. Millington," she replied in a determined tone, which made me think there was no shaking this young woman, once she had made up her mind and expressed it.

"Well, my dear," I said, feeling it best, in George's interests, not to oppose so resolute a maid, "all we can hope for is that Miss Haldane will soon be happily married and

settled."

"I'm sure I hope so," said Rachel, ingenuously.

"For George's sake, my dear?"

"Yes, for George's sake, and my own. A girl couldn't

wish for a better man than George, Mr. Millington."

"That she could not, my dear, nor a truer, nor a more faithful lover. And now, Rachel, the question that comes to me is, does Miss Haldane's happiness depend upon herself or upon someone else? There's a lover abroad, you told me, a young gentleman who's trying to make his fortune over the water. Does Miss Haldane's happiness depend upon him?"

"In one way it does, in another way it doesn't. You see, Mr. Millington, they can't do as they like, my young lady and her true sweetheart over the sea. There's a big

stone in the way."

"The stone has a name, Rachel."

"The name's Mr. Redwood."

- "Ah, Mr. Louis Redwood, the bosom friend of Mr. Haldane."
- "That's what he appears to be, and it makes the stone all the bigger and harder. They're as thick as——" She did not put the last word to the common saying, not liking to apply it to Miss Haldane's father, though I doubt whether she would have had the same scruple with respect to Mr. Redwood.
- "Rachel," I said, "I think it is a good thing we are having this conversation; no harm can come of it, and some good might. Do you mean to tell me that Mr. Redwood wants to marry your mistress?"

"He has proposed to her," said Rachel.

"And she has refused him?"

"Yes."

"How does he take her refusal?"

"Laughs at it, won t accept it seriously, says she cannot know her own mind, and that he will go on loving and loving her."

"What does her father say?"

"He backs Mr. Redwood up. Of course you know, Mr. Millington, my young lady doesn't tell me everything that passes between her father and her."

"I should think, my dear, she tells you very little; but

you've got a head on your shoulders."

"I have to guess the best part. He talks to her in his study, with nobody else by, and when she comes out I see by her eyes that she's been crying. Mr. Millington, the other day I saw Mr. Redwood crossing the bridge over the lake to Chudleigh Woods, and said I to myself, 'if he'd only fall in and be drowned?' I did; I can be very wicked when I'm thoroughly worked up."

"I thought of the scene on the bridge with Honoria and of her interview with Mr. Louis Redwood, at which I had

been present, an unseen witness.

"I'll not admit that, my dear," I said. "Instead of 'wicked' say 'staunch and loyal."

"Thank you, Mr. Millington. The trouble is, to be staunch and loyal when you're being pulled two opposite ways at once. I did wish that Mr. Redwood would tumble into the lake, I did indeed. It's that deep and that tangled with lily roots, that it wouldn't have been easy for him to get out."

"Mr. Haldane and he being so thick together, it's likely

that they often meet in London."

"From what my young lady lets fall I should say they do. What do you think I've heard whispered about, Mr. Millington—not from my young lady, but other people?"

"Tell me, Rachel."

"That Mr. Redwood is almost as much master here as Mr. Haldane himself. Mr. Redwood is enormously rich; they say he's got millions and millions. When he was quite a child, the story goes, a very, very large fortune was left to him, and he wasn't to have it till he was twenty-one years of age. All the time he was growing up the fortune kept growing up too, so that in the end it became something wonderful. I've heard that he could spend a thousand pounds a week, and not feel it. It's a pity his money didn't fall to a better man."

"It is. The whisper that's about, that he's almost as much master here as Mr. Haldane, is caused, I should say—supposing there be any foundation for it—by Mr. Haldane

borrowing money of him."

"That's what I've heard. Large sums of money."

"Which indicates that Mr. Haldane is pressed for it. There are mortgages, perhaps. All this is very serious, Rachel; it doesn't make the road smoother for your mistress. Will she give way eventually? Will her father persuade her to mary Mr. Redwood?"

"Never, Mr. Millington, never, though there wasn't another man in all the wide world. She doesn't dare to say

but she hates the very sight of him."

"Still, with her father on his side, urging her-"

"No, Mr. Millington, no. She's quiet, and gentle, and has the temper of an angel, but she can be firm as a rock. She'll be true to her lover though they may never come together; her father and Mr. Redwood may break her heart between them, but they won't persuade her to marry a man she doesn't love."

"It's often done, Rachel," said I ruefully, for George's hopes were becoming more and more difficult of realization.

"I believe it is, but my young lady's not one of that

"I will put a case before you, my dear. Matters being in the unfortunate position you have described, two things occur which have not been introduced. The first is, that the true lover across the seas continues to be so unfortunate that there is very little hope of his being able to come home and marry. The second is, that the father tells his daughter that he is in the power of the false lover, and that if she does not consent to marry him he will be ruined. What then?"

"I don't know what then," said Rachel pettishly. "Mr.

Millington, you can say dreadful things!"

"My dear," I said soothingly, "I am only considering the subject from all points of view, as a man of my age and experience, and the father of a young man like Georgewhose happiness is at stake as well, remember—is bound to do. You are mistaken if you think I was drawing upon my imagination in putting the case to you. It has happened again and again."

"It won't happen with my young lady," said Rachel, resolutely, "if I can prevent it."

"You wouldn't give way?"

"I'd be chopped into little bits first. Mr. Millington, you paid me a complaint by saying that I had a head on my shoulders."

"You deserved it, my dear."

"I'm not the only one. You've got a head on yours; I've found that out. When you were with my young lady you must have noticed that she wasn't as bright as usual."

"Yes, I noticed it."

"You left her a bit brighter because of something you. told her about that Honoria."

"Did Miss Haldane tell you, then?"

"She told me nothing," replied this very sagacious young

maid; "she knows I don't care for Honoria, and she won't make it worse against a young woman who's—well, never mind what she is. I don't need to be told everything; if I did, what would be the good of the head on my shoulders you think so highly of? I saw what I saw, and I judged accordingly. But there was a reason for my young lady not being bright and happy, when you first saw her, and Honoria wasn't that reason."

"What was, Rachel?"

"Before her father went to London this last time he and my young lady were together in his study a good hour. A bad hour, I ought to call it, because all that day she never opened her lips to me. That didn't prevent me knowing what he'd been talking to her about; and when Mr. Redwood, who went to London with Mr. Haldane, said goodbye to my young lady, with his false voice and cold eyes, that can be as cold and cruel as voice and eyes can be, I'd have liked to poison him. That's the reason of her being unhappy. Every morning there comes from London baskets of the loveliest flowers that Mr. Redwood sends to her. They must cost a mint of money; but what's the use of 'em to a lady who doesn't love him, and whose got more flowers growing here all around her than she knows what to do with? She hardly looks at his hateful presents, and when I take and put them out of sight she never as much as asks what I've done with them. Do you call that love, on his side or hers? He only sends the flowers to show that he's got a power over her through her father, and I hate him, and hate him, and hate him!"

She stamped her foot, and I could not but admire her for her loyalty, though it stood in the way of her own

happiness.

"If George saw me like this," she said, presently, with a little uncomfortable laugh, "he'd think I've got a nice temper of my own. I can't help it. Right's right, and

·wrong's wrong."

I turned the subject by saying, "It's a pity Miss Haldane hasn't a mother living whose influence, used on her daughter's side, would be likely to turn the scale in her favor."

"It is a pity," assented Rachel.

- "Does Miss Haldane ever speak of her mother?" I asked.
  - "Never."

"Is there a portrait of the lady in the Hall?"

"If there is," said Rachel, "I've not seen it."

"How long have you been in Miss Haldane's service?"

"Nine years."

"That was long after Mrs. Haldane's death?"

"It must have been. I've never heard her spoken of

by anybody."

It was clear that Rachel could give me no satisfactory information upon an important branch of the tangled story. Recognizing this, I began to speak of other things, and was pleased to see the vexed and anxious look fade out of her eyes before I left her for the night. The landlord of the "Brindled Cow" kept out of my way on my return, or rather, was kept out of my way by his careful wife, who must have had some suspicion that he had been too free with his tongue. Smoking my pipe I strolled along the quiet, narrow street of the village, reflecting upon the position of affairs. I had gained an insight into certain matters which had an important bearing upon the story of love and intrigue, but the longer I thought of it the more satisfied was I that I was wise in throwing up my share in it. Only one consideration would have induced me to act otherwise, and that was that I might be able to serve George in his courtship of pretty Rachel Diprose. But I did not see my way to this, and it was with an unquiet mind I sought my pillow, and strove to believe that things would come right in the end with him and Rachel and Miss Haldane.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

DURING my breakfast the next morning the solemn looking house steward of the Hall called upon me, and said that he had received a telegram from Mr. Haldane, who

was on his way to Chudleigh, and would receive me at the Hall at twelve o'clock. I replied that I would wait upon Mr. Haldane at that hour, and he left me without uttering an unnecessary word. I whiled away the interval comfortably enough, and that the landlord of the "Brindled Cow" was still guarded from my snares by his ostensibly meek and spiritless spouse did not disturb my equanimity. At the Hall I was received without delay by Mr. Haldane in his study. He came straight to the point.

"I did not expect," he said, "that you would have anything to impart to me so soon, or I should not have left Chudleigh; but I was well within reach, and there has been a delay of only a few hours. I presume you have

something to communicate."

"Yes, sir," I said. "I think I may safely say that I

have executed the commission you entrusted to me."

"You have been quick about it," said Mr. Haldane, and I observed indications of nervousness in his manner, which was that of a man upon his trial waiting for the verdict. I had made up my mind to allow no sign to escape me during this interview. "Let me hear what you have to say."

"Miss Adeline Ducroz and Mr. Julius Clifford," I com-

menced, "were in Paris in the year you named."

"A waste of words," said Mr. Haldane, with a frown. "You were informed to that effect. Have you been employing your time in verifying the statements I made to you on behalf of Mr. Clifford?"

"Not that I am aware of, in any special way," I replied, pausing a moment to preserve my temper, which Mr. Haldane's haughtiness had aroused. "Mr. Haldane, it seems to me necessary to remind you that I did not seek this commission. You placed yourself in communication with me in the first instance, and it was with reluctance I undertook the task."

"I see no need for argument," said Mr. Haldane. "Have you any special reason for what you are pleased to

remind me?"

"I have, sir. You do not speak to me with courtesy."

He stared hard at me, and paused to master his temper, as I had paused to master mine. Evidently he was not accustomed to be so addressed by those whom he considered and treated as his inferiors. He paused longer than I did. half expecting me, I think, to speak, and thus save him the awkwardness of replying in a direct manner to my independent remonstrance, but I preserved silence, and waited for him, which was another novel experience to the proud gentleman.

"I have no intention," he said, "of treating you discourteously. I shall feel obliged if you will proceed."

"I had to begin at some point," I said, "and that point was Paris. If I had not ascertained that Miss Ducroz and Mr. Clifford were in Paris at the time you mentioned I should have come to a full stop at once. You hampered my inquiries by omitting to supply me with the name of the hotel at which they stopped.

"I informed you," he said, "that I would endeavor to

obtain it, and would send it on to you."

"I received no communication from you," I said, determined not to spare him, "and I must therefore repeat that my movements were hampered. I infer that you communicated with Mr. Clifford, and that he had forgotten the name."

"You may infer as much."

"The first thing to ascertain," I proceeded, taking, I must own, a malicious pleasure in the method I was adopting, "was whether they stopped at any hotel. They did not; they occupied a private apartment. Shall I go on from that point?"

"Certainly from that point. Why the inquiry?"

"Because my investigation has furnished me with particulars relating to the history of the parties before they visited Paris."

He turned pale, understanding what I intended him to understand, that I had discovered that the particulars of their previous history with which he had furnished me were false.

"We will not go into that," he said; "commence at

"When Mr. Clifford left the lady in Paris she was in a dangerous illness, brought on partly by a lamentable infatuation for drink."

"Only partly brought on by that infatuation?" he

inquired, warily.

"So my information goes. She was sufferingl greatly from grief of mind produced by her relations with Mr. Clifford, which dishonored her, and were more dishonorable to him."

"Are you here to preach morals, Mr. Millington?"

"I am here, sir, to relate what I have learned, in accordance with your instructions. I assume that you are anxious that nothing should be concealed."

"Proceed, if you please."

"The malady from which Miss Ducroz was suffering led to such strange developments that it was right and proper that its cause should be traced, although such information as I have gained on that score was not the result of direct investigation. It came to me in a chance way, as it were. Her passion for drink was more a cultivated than an inherent vice, and it was produced by Mr. Clifford's treatment of her."

"A statement of that nature," said Mr. Haldane, "can

be but mere hearsay."

"It might not be difficult," I retorted, "to obtain something more than mere hearsay evidence upon the point. Some time after the departure of Mr. Clifford from Paris, with the precise date of which you did not furnish me, a child was born, a girl."

"Who died," said Mr. Haldane, somewhat too quickly.

"So it was reported, but the particulars of its death, such as date, place of burial, et cetera, are wanting. Without these particulars the death of the child cannot be absolutely established. It is said that the baby died while the mother was in a delirious state, and she heard of it for the first time during an interval of reason when she was living in the house of a foreign doctor who undertook the cure of the disease from which Miss Ducroz was suffering."

"The poor woman," said Mr. Haldane, "ended her days

here."

"She did not."

Mr. Haldane's face turned white as falling snow. "She

did not!" he echoed.

"She did not," I repeated. "With the assistance of an attendant in that house she made her escape, and finding her way to the cottage in which this attendant's sister, a married woman, resided, lived with her there some short time, until the occurrence of a calamitous circumstance which caused her to fly from the place."

"Are you certain," asked Mr. Haldane, "that you have

"Are you certain," asked Mr. Haldane, "that you have not been pursuing a false track, that you are not confusing one woman with another? His voice was very strained as he put this question, and his face had not regained its

color.

"I am quite certain that I have not been misled. There is no possible doubt as to the exactness of my information."

"Does proof of this exist?"

I did not reply; bearing in mind Mr. Barlow's caution as to how far I was warranted to go in my disclosures, I was on my guard.

"Does proof of this exist?" repeated Mr. Haldane.

"Why do you not answer me?"

"It is not in my power to do so," I said. "Much of my information has been gained through a third party,

who has imposed secrecy upon me."

"A third party!" exclaimed Mr. Haldane, beating the table in anger with his clenched hand. "Then you have betrayed my confidence, and have made the affair with which I entrusted you common property."

"I have done nothing of the kind, Mr. Haldane," I said firmly, "and if you do not treat me with proper respect I

shall put an end to this interview immediately."

"You will put an end to this interview," he cried.

"I will, indeed," I said, in a calm voice. "Had it not been for yourself I should have known nothing of the affair, and my one regret is that I ever allowed myself to be dragged into so base a piece of business. Take the blame upon your own shoulders for compelling me to address you in such a manner. You seem to forget, sir, what

you owe to yourself and to others in your transactions. You seem; also, to forget that you are acting for a person

with whom I am not supposed to be acquainted."
"I am corrected," said Mr. Haldane, showing the white feather, as all blusterers do when they are met with a bold front; "but you, too, seem to forget yourself when you refer to Mr. Clifford as a person, instead of speaking of him

as a gentleman."

"I decline," I said, preserving my composure, although I was inwardiy somewhat chafed, "to regard him as a gentleman after what I have learnt of his character; were he present at this moment I should have no hesitation in saying so to his face. Perhaps it will be best, after all, sir, as we are both getting rather heated, to carry out my suggestion of ending this interview. I had no intention, when I came to see you, of doing or saying anything except what belongs properly to the unfortunate commission I accepted from you. Had you allowed me to tell my story straight on, and to give you the result of my inquiries without interruptions, I should not have been provoked into the expression of opinions."

"The interview," said Mr. Haldane, almost deferential now in his manner, "cannot be allowed to end here. I will not use the word 'unprofessional,' but it certainly would not be fair to withhold any further information which you may have gathered in the course of the business you undertook for me, on behalf of Mr. Clifford. You cannot imagine that I have myself any personal interest in the matter, and it is therefore ridiculous that I should have taken up your opinions so warmly. I apologize to you, Mr. Millington,

and beg you to proceed."

"Very well, sir. How it was that the rumor you mentioned of Miss Ducroz dying in the house of the doctor got about I cannot say; I have heard nothing of such a rumor until now from your lips——"
"Say, if you please," interrupted Mr. Haldane, "from

Mr. Clifford's lips."

"As you are acting for Mr. Clifford, sir," I said, with intentional emphasis, "it is one and the same." The arrow struck home, I saw, but I did not appear to notice it. "Shortly after Miss Ducroz's flight, however, from the cottage in which she had found a refuge a rumor of her death was circulated, and it was supposed she committed suicide by drowning. That rumor, also, proved to be false, for some four or five years afterwards Miss Ducroz was seen alive by a woman who was acquainted with her."

"May I ask who this woman is?"

"Mr. Clifford will remember her. She is the woman wno nursed Miss Ducroz in Paris, under his direction and in his pay."

"Is it known positively that she was employed and paid by Mr. Clifford?" asked Mr. Haldane, again, by his agita-

tion and imprudence, laying himself open to attack.

"By whom else," I replied, "could she have been employed and paid? Miss Ducroz had no family or friends in Paris or England, and she was destitute of means. The only friend she had in the world was in America at that time—so my information goes."

"A lady or gentleman friend, may I enquire?"

If I had not been aware that he himself was Julius Clifford, his eagerness and his curiosity to learn all I knew would have betrayed him.

"A lady who had brought Miss Ducroz up as her daughter, and who took her to America. Her name is

Kennedy. You will tell Mr. Clifford this?"

"I shall tell him everything you have imparted to me. It is dry work, Mr. Millington, relating so long and wearisome a story. Will you have a glass of wine?"

some a story. Will you have a glass of wine?"

"No, thank you, sir," I said, as he produced wine and glasses from a compartment in the sideboard. "I consider

myself on duty, and I never drink during business."

His hand trembled as he poured out a full glass and tossed it down; he filled another and pushed it towards me, but I did not touch it.

"You were saying, Mr. Millington-"

"That Miss Ducroz being in Paris without friends or means, and being attended by nurses and doctors, it must have been Mr. Clifford who paid the expenses of her illness." "Is it not possible that she may have made another

friend during her residence in Paris?"

"Possible enough," I replied, "but the information obtained is too precise and absolute to admit of such a conjecture. Here, sir, I come to an end of my task."

"You have ascertained nothing further with respect to

Miss Ducroz?"

"Nothing further that I can speak of with certainty, or that I have the right to speak of at all."

"That is a strange answer. Can you inform me whether

she is still living?"

"It is not in my power to answer that question."

"You have gained a vast amount of information in a short space of time," said Mr. Haldane, with a furtive but keen observance of me. "What methods did you adopt?" "They are my own, sir. I cannot disclose them."

"You consider it fair not to do so?"

"Quite fair, sir. We never reveal professional secrets."

"There is a likelihood that you have discovered more than you have imparted to me. For instance, the name of the

Parisian nurse to whom you have referred."

"Yes. Madame Pau. She met Mr. Clifford in Paris some time after Miss Ducroz's departure from that city, and it was he who informed her that Miss Ducroz and her child were dead. This is a proof that he had taken means to keep himself acquainted with Miss Ducroz's history after he deserted her in Paris."

"You are not choice in your language, Mr. Millington."
"I am speaking, sir, of Mr. Clifford, not of Mr. Haldane."

"True; but I had no idea you were so sensitive."

"You surely did not suppose you were employing a machine?"

"No, certainly not. I should like to ask another question or two, Mr. Millington."

"You can do so, sir, but I will not promise to answer

"Did your investigations lead you to any disclosures, true or false, of Mr. Clifford's acquaintance with Miss Ducroz before their visit to Paris?"

I did not regret the opportunity he afforded me to answer and sting him. "They did. I am acquainted with the complete history of their acquaintance."

"Does it tally," he asked, "with the account I gave you

of that acquaintance?"

"It does not, sir. There is a very serious difference in the two versions. Remember, if you please, that I do not make this statement voluntarily. You have invited it."

"You will favor me, I dare say, with the false version presented to you by the—the—," He was in a difficulty

for words to express himself—"the opposing party."

"I cannot do that, sir."

"Will money buy it from you, Mr. Millington?"

"Money will not buy it from me, sir."

"We will speak of it again by and by; my desire is to remain on friendly terms with you. What do you propose now to do?"

"I have completed my task, sir, and all I have to do is to render my account. It is here, sir, and you can examine it now, or at your leisure. You gave me a cheque for two hundred pounds. My journeys to and from Chudleigh Park, with the incidental expenses, amount to less than five pounds. I have brought the balance in cash, and shall feel obliged if you will count it."

"But, Mr. Millington," he exclaimed, in amazement, "you do not mean to say that the expenses of so wide an inquiry can have been so light? It is preposterous. Keep the money, I beg. There is your professional experience,

your valuable time-"

"For which," I said, not interrupting him, and only taking his words up because he did not finish the sentence, "I make no charge. I relinquished business some time since, and should never have returned to it."

"I cannot be under any obligation to you," he said, with the mortification of a proud, vain man accustomed to have his way. "I shall insist upon paying you for your

services."

"You cannot force me to accept payment," I said, with a smile; I had had the upper hand of him all through, and

I meant to keep it. "It is not worth while arguing, sir. I

wish you good morning."

"Stay," he cried, as I stepped towards the door, "there is something exceedingly suspicious in the attitude you have assumed. Another man would doubt whether you had behaved honestly by him."

"It is open to you to do so," I retorted. "I certainly

should not answer such an accusation."

"Or," he continued, "having accepted a commission from a gentleman who entrusted you with certain secrets, you, without warning or notice, transferred your services to some person or persons who wish to injure him."

"I will satisfy you so far," I said. "I am in the service of no person whatever, and shall not stir actively in the

matter from this day forth."

So saying I wished good day again, and left him with a dark cloud upon his face, standing by the table, upon which

he was beating the devil's tattoo.

"Rachel," I said, later in the day, when she was walking with me to the railway station, "I do not think you will see me in Chudleigh again. Our next meeting will be in London, and I hope it will be soon."

## CHAPTER XXV.

I HAVE now very nearly concluded the task I engaged to perform, urged to its performance partly by my desire to recall and review the direct part I had played in this story of human passions, but chiefly by the persuasion of my old friend and partner Mr. Barlow (now retired from business, and devoting himself to a more congenial pursuit). I should not have undertaken it in any circumstances had not the story reached a point—far ahead of the time at which I ceased my labors—when, happily, I found relief from anxieties which had been long oppressing me. These anxieties were directly connected with my son George and Rachel Diprose. As to this I shall say no more, leaving the matter with Mr. Barlow, in accordance with his desire.

"After you deliver your manuscript into my hands," he said to me, "I promise that you, and others, shall have the opportunity of continuing this strange story to its natural end—if," he added, "the term natural can be properly applied to some of its phases. It is a book of human life as it is lived to-day, and it would be next door to a crime to allow it to be lost to the world."

"You intend to make use of it," I said, as usual jump-

ing to one of my conclusions, "in a literary way."
"Say that I confess as much," he replied, "and thank me for performing a service to men and women, while sat-

isfying my ambition."

Certainly since my personal connection with Mr. and Miss Haldane there have been strange developments in their history, as well as in the histories of others who have been incidentally introduced into this drama, and mention has been made in certain papers of some of the incidents that have occurred. How far the public have the right to a knowledge of such-like matters I should not like to say, the conditions and demands of social life are so very different to-day from what they were. Nor will I commit myself to an opinion as to the taste which dictates disclosures of private matters with which newspaper readers are now familiarized. I leave the question for wiser and abler men than myself to discuss and decide. Sufficient for me that my anxieties are at an end, and that, as in oldfashioned melodrama (which does not greatly differ from the melodrama at present in vogue at West End threatres) virtue has been rewarded and vice defeated. There are blots on the scenes which followed my retirement from active participation in the drama, blots which have made me ponder, as they will many men. It is not all sunlight; there are shadows here and there which suggest sad reflection. That is all I shall say; to lift the curtain higher would probably interfere with Mr. Barlow's plans.

Having, then, washed my hands of the affair, I bade adieu to Mr. Haldane and his daughter, and left Chudleigh Park with the idea that I should never visit it again unless under the impulse of curiosity. I returned to London a

much lighter-hearted man than I had been for several days past; it really seemed to me as if I had got rid of a night-mare. The landlord of the "Brindled Cow" had given me plenty to think about in his half revelations of the character of Mr. Haldane, but, although for a short time afterwards my thoughts often wandered in that direction, I got them out of the unpleasant groove, and wooed myself back to the little home circle of daily life in which I found my greatest pleasure. My first visit, upon my return to London, was paid, of course, to Mr. Barlow, to whom I related all that had passed at the "Brindled Cow" and the Hall. Nothing surprises Mr. Barlow, and consequently he expressed no surprise at the information I gave him.

"It is imprudent for a man to make enemies," he said, "and it is an error into which the proud gentleman of Chudleigh Park falls rather heavily. It is so easy to avoid hurting men's feelings, but it belongs to his pride to do so systematically. If he should have a fall—I am speaking metaphorically, Millington—there are plenty who will rejoice. I told you that you would have a hard task with him. He curbed himself in, evidently, being frightened by the knowledge you have gained of his character; but take my word for it, if ever he can do you a bad turn he will

not hesitate."

"He is not likely to have the opportunity," I said, "our

lines lay far apart now."

"It is those lines that lie so far apart," observed Mr. Barlow, sagely, "that so often cross when least expected. High and low are closer together than you suspect. Life's a chessboard; move a pawn wrong, and your king's in danger. That's a singular letter you tell me of from the girl Honoria to Miss Haldane. What if she should come into the play?"

"Hardly possible," I remarked.

"In the highest degree possible," said Mr. Barlow, in correction. "Miss Haldane's future is involved in that of Mr. Louis Redwood. There are strong links between Honoria and Mr. Redwood. Mr. Redwood is in close connection with Mr. Haldane. See?"

"I am not going to worry my head," I said gaily. "I leave it to you, Barlow."

"And what they call fate," said Mr. Barlow, thought-

fully.

"I am content," I said. "I am free."

"Not quite," said Mr. Barlow. "You will hear some-

thing yet, not of your seeking, of that fellow Simpson."

Mr. Barlow was right. I think it was within a week that, standing at my street door, smoking a pipe, I saw Mr. Simpson coming down the street towards me.

"Here I am, Millington," he said, with gratified effusion,

"as large as life."

When I saw him first I had the inclination to beat a retreat into my house, and to send my little maid to the door, with the information that I was not at home, but upon second thoughts, which whispered to me that Simpson was not the kind of man one could shake off at will, I stood my ground, and gave him my hand.

"And how are you, Millington?" he cried, heartily.

"How are you, old friend?"

I replied that I was very well, which was true, and that

I was glad to see him, which was false.

"I knew you would be," he said, "after our pleasant meetings in Chudleigh. You've been down there again. Had a jolly time, I hope."

"Pretty well," I said.

"Now, Millington, Millington," he said, in sportive rebuke, "I wouldn't have believed it of you. 'What I like about Millington,' I said to friend yesterday, when I speaking of you and telling my friend what a thorough clipper you were, 'What I like about Millington is that there's nothing double-faced about him. And that's a good deal more than you can say of most Londoners.' A jolly time at Chudleigh! No, no, Millington—no, no, my friend."

"What did you ask me for, then?" I said.

"To hear what you thought of Chudleigh when you were there without a congenial soul to cheer you up."

"You being the congenial soul."

"Who else, I should like to know? I took to you

instanter, and you took to me. We're matched, Millington; cut out for each other. We might have been boys together when I think of the feeling I've got for you. Chudleigh's

the beastliest hole that a man can vegetate in."

And then he launched out into a violent attack upon Chudleigh, which reminded me of the landlord of the 'Brindled Cow," although that worthy's dislike to Chudleigh was more mildly expressed. In this respect, and in respect of being loose-tongued in their cups, there was a marked resemblance between Simpson and my friend the landlord.

"I say," asked Simpson when he had exhausted his theme, "between pals, what took you down to Chudleigh?"

"Between men of the world, say," I suggested.

"Good. Between men of the world, what took you down there?"

"Business"

"Oh, business," said Simpson, warned by the tone in which I uttered the word that he was not likely to get much out of me.

"Private business," I said to clench the matter.

"Ah, private business. Good to invest money there, you told me. Made up your mind.

"Not quite."

"Likely to go down again?"

"Not at present."

"You're a close one, Millington," he said, smothering his chagrin in a laugh. "Well, I won't be hard on you. That's the advantage of being a Londoner, and living in London. You've feathered your nest. This is the place for making money——"

"And spending it."

"Yes, and spending it—the right way, mind. Seen anything of Honoria?"

"Nothing. Have you?"

"Not set eyes on her. I went to see a play the other day—'Lost in London.' It was all about a young woman, too."

"Easy enough for a young woman to do that."

"To lose oneself here. Right you are, Millington. And to play one's game here without anybody being the wiser. But mum's the word, eh?"

"It is a safe word."

"It is. You're a knowing bird, but there's others as knowing."

"No doubt."

"Mustn't tell tales out of school, eh?"

"Depends upon the kind of company you re in," I said. From Simpson's state of restlessness, burning to babble, and but feebly held back by prudential considerations, I judged that he had been imbibing a glass or two. I did not encourage him, however; I had done with his master, and had no disposition to be drawn into the net again.

"I'll tell you what, Millington," said Simpson. "I've

got a night off, aud I'll spend it with you."

This was cheerful, and inwardly I did not receive it gracefully; but in a sort of way I had brought the infliction upon myself by the address card I had given Simpson in Chudleigh, and without being downright boorish I could

not very well shake him off.

"I will," he said. "We'll make a night of it. You shall give me a cup of tea, and then we'll go to a musichall or a theatre. Musichall for choice. It's livelier; you can see life there. I don't ask you to stand treat. We'll pay equal shares. That's only fair. When I'm in London I feel like a sailor just come ashore. No meanness about me, Millington. Here's my money,"—he rattled some coins in his pocket—"and I spend it free. What's life without jollity? I'll wait till I'm sixty before I become a chapel man."

As luck would have it, my little maid came to the door,

and said that tea was ready.

"That's what I call friendly," said Simpson, clapping me on the shoulder. "After you, Millington, after you."

So I stepped back into the passage, and Simpson followed me. George, who had come home early from his workshop, ran downstairs from his room, where he was fashioning some article for his future domestic life, with

Rachel, and pulled himself up when he saw me in the company of a stranger.

"My son, George," I said, introducing them. "This is

Mr. Simpson, from Chudleigh Park."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, young Mr. Millington," said Simpson." You'rea chip of the old block. Hallo!"

What caused this exclamation was a photograph of Rachel Diprose, for which George had made a pretty frame. It hung over the mantelshelf. He looked at the picture, looked at George, and George looked at him.

"If my eyes don't deceive me," said Simpson, "that's a fair friend of mine. There can't be two of 'em. Pretty

Rachel, from the Hall."

"Miss Diprose," said George, stiffly.

"Yes, pretty Rachel Diprose. But I had no notion she'd ever been in London.'

"She never has been, I believe," I said, and then I explained that some months ago George had been down in Chudleigh, assisting in the alterations at the Hall.

"I remember their being made," said Simpson, with a lofty air, "though I wasn't in England at the time. Mr.

Haldane and I were travelling in foreign parts."

"I didn't see you in Chudleigh," said George, still very stiff. The two men did not take to each other, but Simpson was more successful in concealing his feelings, whatever they may have been, than my lad.

"It's my opinion," he said, with an attempt at jocularity, tapping George on the breast, and giving him a wink, "that

you're a gay Lothario, a regular Don Ju-an."
"Begging your pardon, Mr. Simpson," said George, with

frown, "I don't care to joke about ladies."

"Very proper," said the unabashed Simpson. "I take off my hat to them—and to you, young Mr. Millington. No disrespect, upon my honor as a gentleman." This time he tapped his own breast with his fingers, and made a bow to George. "It's a pleasure thrown in, so to speak, to find oneself suddenly in the presence of the picture of a young person-

"Of a young lady," corrected George.

"Of a young lady who lives in the same house as I do. Show me a prettier face, young Mr. Millington, and I'll be bound to dispute it with you." Then he hummed an air, and sang a line of a song commencing with "Woman, dear woman."

Perceiving George's displeasure I put a stop to the awkward episode by saying, "Come along. Tea is waiting for us."

"And I am waiting for it," said Simpson, seating himself

with assumed geniality.

He did full justice to the meal, conversing chiefly with me, for George scarcely opened his lips. He was nettled, and he took no trouble to disguise it.

"We're going to a music hall," said Simpson, addressing

him when he had had his fill. "Will you join us?"

"No, thank you," said George, and I did not attempt to

persuade him.

When we rose from the table Simpson insisted upon my showing him my garden; our eating room was at the back of the house, and the window looked out upon my bit of ground. I was not sorry to get him away from George, and we went into the garden together, George going up to his room in no very amiable temper. Before we left the house I had a word with my lad, and he confided to me his opinion that Simpson was an insufferable cad, in which I heartily agreed with him.

"We sha'n't see anything more of him after to-night," I said. "He was rather useful to me in Chudleigh, and I've

got to put up with him for an hour or two."

George threw his arm around my shoulder, and said, "All right, dad. It takes all sorts to make a world. Mr. Simpson's not one of my sort, that's all."

"Nor one of mine, my boy," I said, and with an affec-

tionate hand-shake I went out with Simpson.

"That's not a bad little pitch of yours, Millington," said he, patronisingly, hooking his arm in mine. "Could put up with it myself. It wants just one piece of furniture to make it complete."

"And what may that be?" I inquired.

"A trim little wife," replied Simpson, and I inwardly blessed my stars that George was not with us; he would have taken Simpson up pretty warmly, for likening a wife to a piece of furniture.

"I'm past that," I said. "Too old to marry."

"Oh, I don't mean you. I was thinking of your George.
Lucky young dog! I say—is it a settled thing between him and pretty Rachel?"

"Can you keep a secret?" I asked.
"Yes."

"So can I."

Whereupon Simpson burst out laughing, and vowed, as he had vowed before, that he was no match for me. He continued to harp upon Rachel, however, and he succeeded in forcing the suspicion upon me that he felt himself rather an injured person in respect to her and George, as though my lad was poaching on his preserves. I held my tongue, and declined to enlighten him on the question whether there was a regular engagement between George and Rachel. Simpson was a trying companion, and I resolved, after this night, to have as little to do with him as possible, though I ruefully contemplated the likelihood of his developing the qualities of a leech. At every third or fourth public-house he made a pause, and invited me to drink, and upon my steadfastly refusing, drank alone. I thought it rather cool of him to tell me after his second glass that it was my turn to stand treat, and upon my demurring he argued the point, with me, contending that we had agreed to pay equal shares in the expenses of the night's pleasures. When I pointed out to him that, so far as the emptying of glasses at public-house bars was concerned, he was having those pleasures to himself, he replied that that was not his fault; there was the liquor, and there the opportunity; to which he added the inquiry whether I did not consider his society worth something. I found all this somewhat trying, and it became more so at the music halls we visited. I use the plural number because we paid for entrance into three of these establishments, with the attractions of which Simpson showed himself to be thoroughly familiar. I

would have left him if I could have done so decently, but he would not part with me, and as I did not wish to make an open enemy of him—chiefly for the reason that he might make things unpleasant for Rachel at the Hall—I submitted. At quarter to twelve, the music halls being closed, we found ourselves in the streets, I steadying my companion, who was by this time in a very maudlin condition. He had extracted from me the promise that I would see him home, wherever that might be, and it is seldom I have had a more unpleasant task. He shed tears, he abused everybody, he swore that his feelings had been imposed upon, he proclaimed war against those who had betrayed him.

"They had better take care," he said, "every man Jack of them, and every woman Jack as well—no, woman's a Jill. I know a thing or two worth money. They had better

take care."

"Hold up," I said.

"Hold up yourself. Why, there's them as call themselves gentlemen, and them as calls themselves ladies—what are they? No better than I am. There's names I could mention, and things I could tell about them, that they'd give something to keep hushed up. Who said hush up?

"You did."

"I didn't. It was you. Millington, you're no better than I won't say what. There's men as calls themselves masters, and men they call servants. Deny it if you can."

"I don't deny it."

"Very well, then. They'd better look out."

Thought I to myself, "If Barlow were in my place he would worm something useful out of Simpson." But I did not try, being heartily sick of him.

"I know a secret or two, Millington," he said.

"I daresay."

"I won't let on, unless they drive me to it, and they've been near it more than once. Butter your bread, Millington, and butter it thick. What can you say against that, you sly dog?"

" Nothing."

"If I had some people's money I'd make a show in the world. What I say is, make everything equal, give every man a chance. I won't speak against young George——'

"You had better not."

"Didn't I say I wouldn't? But why should some men have every woman, and leave other men as good as themselves out in the cold? It's an unfair division. There'll be a riot some day, and then they'll know all about. Where

are you shoving to?"

He had stumbled against two gentlemen who were passing us arm in arm. They turned and looked at us, and I recognized Mr. Haldane and Mr. Louis Redwood. I do not know whether they recognized me; I wheeled Simpson aside, and they did not accost us, but the chance encounter did not add to my comfort; my apparently confidential association with Simpson could easily have been interpreted into treachery.

"Did you see who those gentlemen were?" I asked.

"I didn't, and I don't care."

"They were your master and Mr. Redwood."

"There's a pair of them. I wish you joy.'
You'll hear something of this to-morrow."

"Shall I? Who cares? When I've got a night off I do what I like with it. Perhaps he'll discharge me, perhaps he won't. I defy him. We're not the only ones who know when our bread's well buttered. That for my master.

He snapped his fingers, and I was well pleased presently when, getting entangled in a crowd gathered to witness a night brawl, the opportunity was afforded me of giving Simpson the slip. His subsequent adventures on this night were no affair of mine. I should have been delighted to hear that they had ended in the lock-up.

#### CHAPTER XXVI.

Mr. Barlow being anxious that I should omit none of my experiences in connection with this history, I have at his request added another chapter, which will be my last.

During the six months that elapsed after my "night out" with Simpson I saw nothing more of him. He did not trouble me, and you may be sure I did not trouble him. There was a sufficient reason, as I afterwards learned, for our not meeting. He and his master had gone abroad, and for the most part of this time remained out of England. I did not pay another visit to Chudleigh Park. Miss Haldane wrote to me once about Honoria, but I had no news to communicate, and I replied to that effect. These were the only letters that passed between us. George, of course, kept up his correspondence with Rachel Diprose, but their marriage appeared as far off as ever. It did not lessen my lad's love for his sweetheart, nor, as her letters proved, hers for him. From these letters I gathered that Miss Haldane's life at Chudleigh Park was rather lonely. She received no visits, and paid none, a sign that she had made no friendships of an enduring nature among those of her station. On two occasions George informed me that there was a likelihood of Miss Haldane and Rachel coming to London for a week or two, and the expectation set him in a glow of delight. But these visits were not paid, being frustrated, as I understood, by Mr. Haldane, who wrote from abroad that his daughter was to remain at the Hall. Once, and once only, did George go to Chudleigh, to see Rachel; he spent a Sunday there, and stopped at the "Brindled Cow"; that he did not go again was due to Rachel, who thought it best that he should keep away for her young mistress' sake, I believe. I took the blame of this upon myself. George was my son, and as I was not in favor with Mr. Haldane my lad's appearance in Chudleigh might have been misconstrued.

"You will be an old man, and Rachel an old woman," I said to George, "before you come together."
"Not quite that, I hope, dad," said George. "Things

will be all right before long."

I did not have much faith in long engagements, and so I hinted to George; but he appeared to be satisfied that nothing could occur to prevent him and Rachel being true to each other.

"She is worth waiting for," he said, "and it's no use

fretting."

Mr. Barlow also was at a standstill; he had made no further progress in the affair upon which he was engaged, for although he made no fresh discoveries he was still in commission. It was his opinion that Mr. Haldane had left England to escape detection. I remarked that if this were the case Mr. Haldane must have had some suspicion that an enemy was working against him. Mr. Barlow concurred, saying that something must have reached Mr. Haldane's ears which put him on his guard. My old partner paid me now regular visits, which George and I returned. He and his wife had grown very fond of George, and about once a week we all took supper together, at Barlow's house or mine. On one of these nights, when we were walking from his house, Barlow, who liked a little walk after supper, being with us, he asked me if I had anything particular to do to-morrow. I answered, nothing.

"I want you to spend an hour with me," he said.

"Come to the office between two and three."

I presented myself accordingly and we turned from Surrey street into the Strand, and there took a 'bus to the Marble Arch. I may mention that it was the height of the season, and London was very gay, by reason of a Royal visit, which set society circles in a flutter.

"I am going," said Mr. Barlow, "to take you to Rotten

Row."

"Anything special going on there?" I asked.

"We shall see," was his reply.

This was somewhat enigmatical, but I knew that Barlow seldom did anything special without a special reason. In the 'bus he volunteered another piece of information.

"Mr. Redwood is in London," he said.

"And Mr. Haldane?" I inquired.

"I cannot say, but it is very likely."

Arriving at Rotten Row we found a good place by the rails, and watched the panorama of fashion as it passed by and repeated itself on horseback and in carriages.

"It is a favorite pastime of mine," said Mr. Barlow.

"I like to see the swells doing duty."

"There are plenty of them," I said, "who don't seem to

be enjoying themselves much."

"It is a sad pleasure to many," said Mr. Barlow, "especially to the carriage swells; but it is a duty they owe to society to show themselves. Look at that lot."

There were three elderly ladies in the turn-out, and unutterable weariness reigned on their faces, which were worn and pasty with late nights. I smiled, and said I would sooner be what I was.

"Bunkum," observed Mr. Barlow. "If you were a swell

you would do likewise."

I disputed this, but Barlow would not be gainsayed. It did not escape me that all the time we were talking he appeared to be looking out for something not in the common way, and a sudden lighting up of his features revealed to me that it was approaching. In a handsome victoria, the appointments of which were absolutely faultless, sat a young lady, who as she came closer to us, caused the blood to rush into my face.

"Ah," said Mr. Barlow, who was observing me closely

as the victoria approached.

"Barlow," I cried, seizing his arm, "you remember my telling you about the girl Honoria I brought to London from Chudleigh Park?"

"Perfectly," he replied. "I don't forget much."

"I could almost swear," I said, "that the very girl is sitting in that carriage."

"Wait till she comes round again," said Barlow."

I strained my eyes till I saw her in the distance. was richly dressed, and leaned back in her carriage with the born negligent air of a lady of fashion. That one so

beautiful should attract universal attention was not surprising; and indeed she was very beautiful. No trace of despair was on her face, which bore the expression of one accustomed to admiration. Hats were raised to her, and now and again a mounted cavalier carolled by her side, and exchanged salutations. Some she received graciously, some coldly, but even in her graciousness there was an air of disdain and power to which all appeared to submit. No lady saluted or acknowledged her, but I noticed that most of them looked furtively, even admiringly, at her. As she passed us the second time she happened to turn her eyes in my direction. They rested on my face, but there was no sign of recognition, although she gazed at me steadily.
"Well?" questioned Barlow.

"It is Honoria," I said.

"That is the name she is known by," said Barlow. "I was here yesterday, and saw her for the first time, and heard her name. That is why I asked you to accompany me to-day."

I sighed, thinking of Miss Haldane. "And this is what she has come to," I said.

"Yes," said Barlow. "She has the world at her feet, this girl whom you saved from drowning in the lake of

We lingered by the rails till she came round a third time, and again her eyes travelled in my direction, and rested a moment upon me, as before. My presence did not appear to discompose her; she was as completely self-possessed and composed as if we had never met before.

"Come and have a cut of mutton with me," said Barlow, an hour or so later, "at the namesake of a friend of

yours in the Strand."

We strolled to Simpson's, and had a good old-fashioned English dinner there, and afterwards went to a theatre where they were playing a rattling farce, mis-called comedy. Strangely enough—it is always so; it never rains but it pours—in the principal box sat Honoria, dressed with elegant taste, with flashing diamonds about her. We were in the pit, and had a good view of her box, in which, between the acts, appeared a succession of gentlemen swells. I saw but little of the farce, my attention being centred upon this girl, once so low, now so shamefully high.

"Let us get another peep at her," said Barlow, when the

curtain finally fell

We hurried to the lobby entrance of the stalls where the visitors were waiting for their carriages, and there I witnessed another comedy, as unexpected as Honoria's appearance in Rotten Row earlier in the day. As she came out to her carriage, leaning on the arm of a gilded youth, Barlow nudged me smartly, and there, to my surprise, was Mr. Louis Redwood, gazing at the girl he had betrayed. He hesitated only a moment, and then, with a confident air, with outstretched hand, and with a smile upon his face, advanced towards her. She gazed at him with superb disdain, and without bestowing any further attention upon him, turned her back upon him. In another moment she was in her carriage, and the smile on Mr. Redwood's face vanished; the "cut direct" was perfect, and people were laughing at him.

Barlow and I talked of the incident as we walked away, and I expressed my surprise at Mr. Redwood's

eagerness to be friendly with Honoria.

"Know the world better, old friend," said Barlow.

"This girl of ours is a marvel of beauty, and men of loose fashion are running wild after her."

"Yes," I said, "it is her beauty that made him so

eager."

"Wrong once more," said Barlow. "It is not her beauty that attracts him now. We run after the unattainable; we despise what is easily obtained; we value things, more or less, not for what they are, but for the ease or the difficulty in getting hold of them. If the girl were as ugly as sin it would be the same to Mr. Redwood. She is a rare commodity, and he sighs for possession. You are familiar with a little fish called the sprat?"

"Of course I am."

"A most delicate, most appetizing fish, but being plentiful can be bought for a penny a pound. Make them as

scarce as red mullet, and the world would rave after them. As it will one day after Honoria, if she plays her cards well."

I make no comment on this scrap of philosophy. My task is ended, and I lay down my pen.

# THE THIRD LINK--FASHIONED OF LET-TERS WRITTEN BY LOVERS AND FRIENDS, FALSE AND TRUE.

### CHAPTER XXVII.

From Frederick Parton, Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand, to G. Parton, Esq., Westminster Palace road, London.

My dear father,—My last, and first, letter written to you from Australia informed you of the safe arrival of our vessel at Melbourne, and was necessarily short, because I had just one hour to make up my mind whether I would accompany a friend I made on the passage out, who, hearing of the discovery of gold in New Zealand,\* urged upon me that it was just the place in which fame and fortune could be quickly won. I allowed myself to be persuaded. My friend had been in Australia before, and he told me that it would be slow work in Australia to make money; the gold fields there were wellnigh worked out, the excitement and the fever were over, people had settled down, and so on, and so on, and so on. I saw the force of his remarks; here was a new land, with new opportunities and glowing possibilities waiting for me. "Done with you," I said, and an hour later we were on board the Eureka—what a name! it was an augury of success—with four or five hundred other adventurers,

<sup>\*</sup>It may be necessary to state that Frederick is not chronologically correct in his reference to the discovery of gcld in New Zealand, but this is a license of which a writer of fiction may legitimately avail himself.—THE AUTHOR.

bent on the same errand as myself. Only I had a special motive which others lacked to spur me on, the love of the sweetest girl that ever drew breath since Eve roamed with Adam through the groves of Paradise. I see you, dear old fellow, shaking your head, and sighing, "Dreams, Fred, dreams! Will you never awake?" And I answer, "No, never." Why? Because I am not dreaming, because I hold fast to Hope, the fairy that touches reality with golden light, that shows me the road to the future, when all my hopes will be realized, and you and I, and one whom I devotedly love, will be living together the happy life. Father mine, what made you a painter and a poet? The solid, serious view of a man's life and a man's ambition, or that very fairy Hope which, with the higher spirit Ambition, directed you into paths which made you what you are? You lost your fortune. Well, I am going to make another for you and her. The diary I kept on the passage from England to Australia, and which I sent you with my first brief letter (making up, I trust, for its shortcomings), will show whether I lost courage on the way; and let me say now that I am stouter-hearted than ever, and that though my pockets at present are poorly lined, I am confident that what you call dreams will one day, and at no distant day either, be proved to be realities. What an incentive is mine! I am coming back to you when my fortune is made. I am coming back to her I love; years of delight and happiness are before us; arm in arm and heart in heart, we shall talk of the harvest the wanderer has reaped for those near and dear to him, and you shall say, "Well done, Fred; you were right and I was wrong-happily

Now, arriving in Dunedin safe and sound, the question was what should I do? The pilot who boarded us and conveyed us into Port Chalmers had set the whole ship in a state of excitement by reports of wonderful discoveries of new goldfields. Transferred at Port Chalmers into a small steam tug that took us through the loveliest bay in the world to Dunedin jetty, the news was confirmed. As for scenery I cannot describe it; my sketch book is filled with

themes for future work—and glory—to say nothing of the gold pieces which will roll in to sweeten success. A picturesque tumbledown wooden jetty, to be replaced one day by a stately stone structure (for I see the grand future already looming), crowds of people burning with the gold fever, wooden shanties hastily thrown up to transact business in, the old Scotch settlers scarcely knowing whether to approve or not of the invasion of heterogeneous human particles, but at the same time, with proverbial wisdom, turning the honest penny and making hay while the sun shines, adventurers bronzed with travel discussing the chances in the unformed street, the continual animated going to and fro, the loading of drays, the clattering of horses, the perspective glimpses of civilization's soldiers marching over the distant hills-imagine all this, father, if you can, and paint pictures from it. But a man's eyes must behold these scenes to properly depict them. They are like a page of old time history, full of romance and color. Said the friend in whose company I journeyed hither, "Off we go to-morrow morning to the goldfields; in six months we come back with our fortunes made." But pride and prudence stepped in and whispered in my ear. Said prudence, "How can you start on such a journey with empty pockets?" Said pride, "Don't humiliate yourself by a confession of poverty." Therefore spake I to my friend, "I cannot accompany you; here in this primitive city of wonders will I stay awhile, and rest my weary feet, and refresh my spirit, and strengthen my body for future toil." (What have you to say, father, to the style biblical? Does it sit well on me?) My friend remonstrated, argued, pressed, but I was firm, and away he went, the nomad, in company with a hundred or two others, straight in the eye of the sun. I to a newspaper office and there enlisted for a pound a day. So behold me, a budding journalist, bent on work and shekels. Here have I been three weeks, and am sixty shillings the richer, after paying board and lodging-no joke, though mutton is twopence a pound. I sit me down and pencil out calculations as to how long it will take me to realize a large fortune,

putting riches by to the tune of twenty shillings a week. Humph! Rather a lugubrious outlook, if the calculation were to turn out an exact one. But this is only a bewere to turn out an exact one. But this is only a beginning. When you build you must commence with single bricks. Then every hour of the twenty-four, and every minute of the sixty, are not swamped by journalistic duties. Two water-colors are near completion, and the next question will be to find purchasers. Are there art worshippers here, are there rich patrons eager to draw large cheques as an evidence of the wedding of grinding commerce and intellectual refinement and taste? The landlord of the principal hotel here, who boasts of taking a thousand pounds a day across his bars, suggests a raffle. By the beard of Venus which never grew, am I descended so low? But why should I fume? Are there not art lotteries in England, and what is a lottery but a raffle? It is a distinction without a difference. We must not be over nice in these new lands. The mail for dear home does not go out for twelve days, and before it closes I shall be able to tell you the result of my first art labor in this world-end Arcadia. I break off my letter here, and go to bed, to dream of you and my dear Agnes. These are dreams in which I have faith.

Now to finish my letter, dear old fellow, the mail closing to-morrow morning. The raffle has come off. There was more than a spice of grim humor in it. The pictures were hung in the public room of the hotel, flanked by a couple of German chromos, hideous and offensive to the cultivated artistic eye. Said I to myself, said I, "My paintings will teach those honest barbarians, will educate them, will prepare them for future works of glory." Puffed up with unbecoming pride—Ah, my dear father, if I had your humility I should be an infinitely better man; blessings on your honest heart!—puffed up then, as aforesaid, I lingered in the public room of the hotel, to take a lesson from the critical opinions of entranced admirers. There were none expressed, absolutely none. The pictures were scarcely glanced at. "We'll wake them up," said my friend and landlord, and

beneath the great achievements was placed a placard with a written intimation that the first original local paintings by an eminent artist would be raffled on Saturday night at half-a-crown a chance. Two blank columns were left for the names of my patrons, and when I first saw this announcement I noted that ten chances had already been subscribed for. I remonstrated with the landlord, who had put up the for. I remonstrated with the landlord, who had put up the placard without consulting me. "What do you object to," he asked. "To the low terms of subscription," I replied, employing the most dignified phrase that occurred to me. "Quite enough," said the landlord. "Look at those pictures"—pointing to the hideous German chromos—"can you compare them with yours?" "No," said I honestly, "I cannot." "More can I," said the landlord, "and they only cost me four pound a pair." Imagine my feelings. When I recovered my composure I pointed out that the number of members required for the coming raffle was not stated "We'll get as many as we can," said the landlord. stated. "We'll get as many as we can," said the landlord.
"The more the merrier." I said nothing, but thought sadly of the converse of the popular saying. In two days the number of subscribers had swelled to twenty-eight, which would bring me in a total of three pounds ten shillings. Depressed by the prospect of my attempt at art culture I suggested that the pictures should be withdrawn. "Can't be done," said the landlord. "People have paid their halfcrowns. The paintings are not your property." I immediately put my name down for six chances, and invested my money, the stern stipulation being that no credit would be given. By Saturday night there were forty-six subscribers to the raffle, and my two great works, which I had fondly hoped would bring me at least fifty pounds each, were won by the proprietor of the cigar emporium. (Take note, there are no shops here, nothing so low.) "Now" said the landlord, "you must stand treat." I was aghast, but a gentleman, called upon for a sacrifice "according to custom," never turns tail. Every person in the large room had a drink at my expense, and so far as I was concerned there was an end to my art venture. Except the settling up. Contemplate the figures. Fortysix subscribers at half a crown a head (less my own six chances) come to exactly five pounds. The frames for the pictures cost me fifty shillings; the "treat," three pounds six shillings; total debt, five pounds sixteen shillings; total loss, sixteen shillings; and my meritorious paintings. "But you've made a start," said the landlord, congratulating me on the venture. Truly I have. Farewell art awhile. I must come down to earth, for this rate of progress resembles the man walking on ice who for every step forward slides two backward.

Now, my dear father, I want you to let me know all about my dear Agnes—how she is, what she says, how she looks, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. What does she think of my diary of the passage across the seas. Heavens? What a waste of water divides us! But I look forward, I look forward, and am not in the least discouraged. As you know, I have bound myself to write to her only once in every six months, and the first term is not yet expired. There is nothing to prevent you sending her my letters to you, and she will know from them that my love is unchanged, that it can never change, and that the one dear hope of my life is to call her wife. Tell her that I am going to be practical. Fortunes are being made on the goldfields. I shall go there, and make one for her. Then I can ask her father for his consent to our union, which I am conscious I cannot do, with any chance of success, while I remain poor. I have the fullest faith in her, as she has in me. God bless her, and you, my dear father. Address your letters to the post office in this city.—Your affection-FREDERICK." ate son,

"From G. Parton, Westminster, Palace road, London, to Frederick Parton, Esq., Post Office, Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand.

"My dear Boy,—Your two letters, one from Australia, the other from New Zealand, with the diary you kept on the passage out, have been safely delivered, and I reply to them by the first opportunity. I sent them to Miss

Haldane, Chudleigh Park, under cover to Miss Rachel Diprose, in accordance with your directions, and I have received them back, with a note from Agnes, in which she desires me to give you her love, and sends you as many kind messages as the fondest love could desire. You ask me to tell you how she is, how she looks, and what she says. She says she is well, and she writes as you do, cheerfully and hopefully, but I have no means of discovering how she looks. Mr. Haldane and I are cousins, it is true, but as wide as the waste of waters between you and those at home who love you is the gulf between him and me. At no time of life were he and I on terms of very friendly intimacy, and our circumstances being so different, it is by no means probable that of his seeking we should be brought nearer to each other. To go to Chudleigh Park without an invitation would be courting an affront, and would not advance your cause. Were Agnes to pay another visit to London, and to stop, as she did on her previous visits, with friends who do not think less of us because we are not rich, I should be able to see her and to chat with her about you; but she says nothing of a contemplated visit, and I judge from her silence that there is little probability of an early meeting. You know how fully and completely I sympathize with you in your hopes of the future, and I shall say nothing to cast a shadow on them. There are youthful dreams which happily come to fruition. May yours be of that nature! Your account of the two pictures you painted is amusing, and going out as you have done to a new country with practical intentions you are wise in your resolution to throw aside the brush, and engaging in those pursuits in which money is most easily made. I am afraid I have not been wise in your education. With my own example before me—a failure as an artist, whatever you may think—I should have given you a commercial education, which would have made you fitter for your present career. However, like you, I am not one to uselessly mourn over a past that cannot be recalled, and I hope for the best. I am painting two pictures for the Academy; is not that a proof that I have still with me Hope your fairy, and that I do not intend to beat a

retreat from the ranks in which many better men than I are struggling? Cherish that fairy, my dear boy-always open your arms and your heart to it; whatever the result, it will brighten your days and nerve your arm. How well I remember my first Academy picture! It is a good many years ago, and I can count on my fingers the number of my pictures that have gained admission since that time. I have told you the story often-how it was sold, how I used to walk the streets with a light heart, not with arrogance, but with just pride, thinking that I had painted the picture of which some influential papers spoke highly, and that a few of the persons who passed me might possibly know that I was the artist. I never sold another picture off the Academy walls, but I am waiting, my boy, I am waiting, and you or I will make a fortune yet. I wish I could paint Agnes' portrait; I feel confident I could make a success of it: with a face so sweet and pure before me I should be inspired, and you should see what you should see. Am I not writing to you with an airy spirit? Ah! but my dear lad, you little know how I miss you. - But there, I am not going to say a word to sadden you; better burn the letter than send it to my wanderer across the seas who is seeking the worldly charm which will secure the happiness of himself and his father and the girl he loves. Until you went away I used to grumble at time passing so quickly, but now it cannot pass too quickly for me, for it will hasten the day of our reunion. Everybody who knows you inquires after you, and everybody sends you the kindest messages. God bless and speed you. "Your loving father,

"G. PARTON."

"From Frederick Parton, Otago, New Zealand, to Miss Haldane, under cover to Miss Rachel Diprose, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park.

"My darling Agnes,—At last the first six months are over, and I can write to you. I wonder sometimes how it was that I gave you the promise to write only once in

every six months, and then my wonder vanishes when I think it was because you asked me, fearing that if I wrote frequently it might set your father against me before the day arrived when I shall feel myself warranted to ask his consent to our union. It is a happiness to me that the severe penance is lightened by my father's letters, who gives me as much news of you as it is in his power to communicate. My dear Agnes, I think of you day and night, and it is your dear image that cheers my lonely hours and sustains my courage. You have heard from my father of my unpromising start, which had something comical in it, and of my determination to seek fortune on the goldfields. Here am I, then, in my digger garb, with beard well grown, and so unlike my London self, that were you to meet me in the street you would hardly recognize me. In order that you may not make that mistake (in the event of a geni taking it into his magical head to perform a miracle with you and me), I draw a picture of myself as I am, which I think will surprise you.

"Now, what shall I say to you, my darling girl, how shall I write, I, upon whom fickle fortune has not yet smiled? But there is time, there is time. I am in a Tom Tiddler's ground, and every day I hear of men drawing grand prizes. It will be my turn one day; it must be my turn, for I have you and love on my side, and the charm will be sure to succeed. The truth, then, is, my darling, that I am no richer at this moment than when I first set foot on these shores. I am in good health, and I do not intend to lose heart. Up early in the morning, working till sunset, earning the respect of those around me, never forgetting that I am a gentleman, whispering your dear name as a charm, and going to sleep with your image in my mind. I have a comrade (they call them 'mates' out here), and we manage to find enough gold to keep us, but there is the chance every hour of finding a big nugget or striking a 'rich patch.' A sailor who had been working for four months, and who has been so unlucky as to come to his last bit of 'bacca,' suddenly plumps upon what is called a 'pocket' of gold. Presto! In three weeks he makes

four thousand ounces—just think of it !—and off he goes home to settle down with his old mother and his sweetheart in Wales. A miner from Cornwall, similarly unlucky, all at once drives his pick into a nest of nuggets, gold birds, large and small, and sends money home to bring his people out to the country where he has made his fortune. So you see, my darling girl, it is only a matter of time: the longer good fortune is a-coming, the brighter is her smile when she shows her face. And I woo her, and woo her, and whisper to the invisible goddess, 'For my dear girl's sake, come, now, for the sake of the dearest, dearest girl in the world!' I give you my word that I utter these words in my most coaxing accents, and that I go to work again refreshed and strengthened by them, with the conviction that my pleadings will not be in vain. We live in a tent like the patriarchs of old, a fitting simile, for at no very great distance from us is a sheep and cattle station where I am always welcome—I walk there sometimes of a Sunday, a matter of twelve miles, easily done on the soft bush roads in three hours—the owner of which, an Eton man like myself, is master of seventy thousand sheep. As I gaze upon his enormous flocks I think of biblical days when Jacob wooed Rebecca, but I do not want to wait so long for my dear girl. Words are poor to express all I feel; dearly as I loved you when I left England I love you still more dearly now. You are my good genius, my good angel, ever by my side. I walk with you through the woods, I sit on a fallen tree and talk to you, your spirit is in my heart. Think of me always as your true and faithful lover, who never lays his head upon his pillow without thanking God for the priceless blessing of your love. My dear girl, does your father know? Have you told him yet? Keep nothing from me. He cannot object to me on the score of birth; it is only that dreadful bugbear money, money, money. I will work and wait for it, and you shall hear from me that our wishes are realized. Do not doubt it, darling. I do not. Heaven guard and shield you and keep you bright and happy till I hold you in my arms. With undying affection, believe me, ever your faithful lover,

FREDERICK.

"From Agnes Haldane, Chudleigh Park, to Frederick Parton New Zealand.

"My dearly beloved,—Your lettermade me happy, so happy! I have read it somany times that I must know it by heart, but I keep on reading it, for it brings you nearer to me. have not the gift of writing long letters, and you must be content with a short one, with all my heart in it. I blame myself very often for being the cause of your leaving England, and going so far away from us; if it had not been for me you would have remained at home with your father, who must feel the separation very much. Do not be away too long, but be sure, my dear, whether you are absent for a long or a short time, I will be true to you, and will wait for you—yes, till I am an old, old woman. I hoped long since to have gone to London on a visit, when I should have seen your father, but papa decided that I was not to leave the Manor Hall, where we are living very quietly, papa having been abroad now for several months. I ought to tell you, dear, but you must not distress yourself about it, for nothing can change me. There is a gentleman who has been here a great deal, and papa would be glad if I encouraged his attentions. His name is Mr. Louis Redwood, and I do not like him, though papa wishes me to. It seems to me that Mr. Redwood understands this, for he has not been to Chudleigh since papa left, and has not troubled me in any way. I only tell you of him because I think it right you should know all that takes place. I have written to papa two or three times, asking him to let me go to London for a few weeks, but his answer is always no. And new you must know something else. I am not very wise, but I have been considering a certain thing lately, and when papa comes home I shall tell him all about you and me. I feel that I am acting wrongly in keeping our secret from him; it is my fault, I know, that this was not done at first, but I was a little afraid of the way papa would take it. Seeing now what it is right to do, I shall have the courage to do it, and I am sure you will approve. Well, now, this is all about myself, and nothing

about you. What a wonderful life you are living, and how strange it must all seem to you. I get all the books I can about Australia and New Zealand, and I know a great deal now about those countries. Rachel Diprose, my maid -such a good girl !- has an uncle there, and she says it is a splendid life, though she is all for London, where she has never been, but where her sweetheart lives. He is ready and anxious to marry her, but the good, foolish girl will not hear of it. She will not leave me, she says (unless I turn her away, and I shall never do that, I like her so much) until I am married. It is not of the slightest use to argue with her; she has made up her mind and has passed her word, and she says she will die rather than break it. See how firm women can be, and if I needed a lesson in firmness, which I don't, dear, she would teach it to me. This is a longer letter than I thought I could write, and I hardly know whether it will satisfy you; but perhaps you will be satisfied when I say that I am yours, and yours only, and that you may be sure I shall never love you less than now. My mind is easier now that I have determined to tell papa everything when I see him. Your letter strengthens me to do this. Good-bye for a little while, dear Frederick. I pray for you always, I think of you always.—With constant love, I am, ever yours,

"To Mr. G. Parton, Westminster Palace road, from Mr. Haldane, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park.

"Sir,—Information has reached me that your son, Mr. Frederick Parton, has taken advantage of my absence during my daughter's visits to London to pay his addresses to her without my knowledge or sanction. Such conduct is scandalous, and unbecoming a gentleman, and hearing of it now for the first time I write to you without an hour's delay to put a stop to the proceeding. I understand that your son is in one of the Australian colonies, and that he has had the presumption to open up a correspondence with my daughter. If I were acquainted with his precise address I should write to him direct, to the same effect as

I am writing to you, and I demand his address from you in order that I may express to him my opinion of his conduct, which, I repeat, is not the conduct of a gentleman. I have views for my daughter with which I shall not allow him to interfere. You, as a father, will not contest my right to views in which my daughter's welfare is concerned, and to the carrying of them out in the way I deem most suitable. Expecting to receive from you your son's address in the colonies, and your concurrence to my demand that the clandestine intimacy shall instantly cease, I am, your obedient servant,

C. HALDANE."

"To C. Haldane Esq., Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park, from Mr. G. Parton, Westminster Palace road.

"Sir,—I am in receipt of your letter, the contents of which I will communicate to my son. From the relation-ship between us, and my standing in society, though far from a rich man, I might reasonably have expected that you would have expressed yourself in different terms, without any regard to the views you hold of 'your daughter's welfare,' and I shall certainly not afford you the opportunity of addressing my son in like manner. Therefore I refuse to give you his precise address. But as many weeks must elapse before he can hear what you have written to me upon a matter as important and dear to him as it is to you, I lose no time in correcting your opinion of his character, an opinion which I trust you have too hastily expressed. My son is a gentleman, upright, honorable, and delicate-minded, and that you should pronounce his conduct 'scandalous' reflects no credit upon you. I regret to be compelled to say this, but you leave me no alternative, and I, and your dear daughter, are perhaps the only persons in this part of the world who have the opportunity of telling you so to your face at the present moment. That he loves your daughter as a gentleman, and hopes to win her, is true, and the only bar I can perceive to the happy result of an honorable attachment is the difference in our circumstances. If, notwithstanding your letter, it should

be his happy faste to be united to your daughter, I, who know my son as no other man knows him, and who knows something of the sweet and amiable qualities of your child, have no hesitation in declaring that their happiness would be assured. It is best that I shall say no more. Time, which tries all, is a beneficent healer, and I place my hope in it.—Faithfully yours,

"G. PARTON."

"To Mr. G. Parton, Westminster Palace road, from Mr. Haldane, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park.

"Sir,—Your reply to my letter is impertinently worded, and is intended as an insult. It is not only an impertinence and an insult, it is a presumption. I shall know how to resent it, and in what manner to guard myself and daughter from its implied defiance to my wishes. You refuse to give me your son's address; I will obtain it from my daughter. You are a dealer in sentiment and cant, and your son doubtless takes after you.—Your obedient servant,

"C. HALDANE."

"To C. Haldane, Esq., Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park, from Mr. G. Parton, Westminster Palace road.

"Sir,—Letters addressed to my son at the Post Office, Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand, will reach him in that colony.—Faithfully yours,

"G. PARTON."

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

From G. Parton, London, to Frederick Parton, New Zealand.

My dear Boy,—The necessity of giving you pain is forced upon me. Enclosed you will find copies of four letters, two addressed to me by Mr. Haldane, and my replies thereto. I do not know if they will come upon you as a surprise; you will certainly be unprepared, as I was, for Mr.

Haldane's communications, and you must act the manly part, and meet them with a man's courage. The form in which he expresses his sentiments is not a graceful one, but we will set that aside; it shows that he is bitterly, strongly in earnest, and it proves him to be a hard, unfeeling gentleman. Here before us, my dear boy, is a battle of heads and hearts, and it has sometimes happened that hearts have won. You will perceive from this remark that I do not advise you to lay down your arms: it is a serious matter for a daughter to go against her father's wishes, but after all it rests with you and Agnes. If she sides with her father, which I do not believe she will, you have no alternative but to retire; if she says, "I will be true to you," then it will be for us to decide how to act in this grave crisis in two young lives. To deplore at this juncture the distance between you and Agnes is to deplore the inevitable, and that it is never wise to do; the inevitable must be accepted, whatever the suffering brings in its train. Take courage, then, and before anything is settled—for Mr. Haldane is not the supreme judge against whose verdict there is no appeal—come to an understanding with Agnes. Remember that you have always your father's love; through weal and woe I am faithful to my dear boy.—Ever your loving father,

G. PARTON.

From C. Haldane, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park, to Frederick Parton, Dunedin, Otago, New Zealand.

Sir,—I have with some difficulty obtained your address from your father, and I now write to you to express my opinion of your conduct in clandestinely following my daughter with your attentions, and in carrying on a correspondence with her without my sanction. No man of honor, no gentleman would pursue such a course, and I shall have no difficulty in exposing your true character to my child. In her name and my own I demand that you instantly cease writing to her or communicating with her in any way whatever. Should you presume to disregard my wishes I shall know how to deal with you.—Your obedient servant,

C. HALDANE.

From Agnes Haldane, Chudleigh Park, to Frederick Parton, New Zealand.

My dearest Frederick,—I write to you in great grief. In my last letter I said that I intended telling papa everything, feeling it was not right that he should be left in ignorance of our attachment He came home last week, and I told him all. My dear Frederick, there was a dreadful scene; he spoke of you in a way that I could not listen to quietly, and though I am not very brave I defended you as well as I could; but what could I say when he asked me if I thought it was proper conduct on the part of a daughter to enter into such a serious engagement without the knowledge or consent of her father? I could only answer one way, and beg his pardon. He said I could make some amends for my fault by promising him that I would not marry without his consent. Even if I had not felt that I had acted so wrongly I should have given him the promise, and I gave it more willingly because of that; and I was encouraged, too, because his passion seemed to be over. "It is a binding promise, remember," papa said, and I answered that I would keep to it. But O, dear Frederick, what have I done? Papa says that he will never, never consent to our marriage, and he commanded me to give him all the letters I received from you and never to write to you again. But that I could not do, and though he talked to me a long time, telling me what my duty was, I would not give way. And now I am very unhappy, not only for myself but for you. I seem not to have a friend except my maid, Rachel, and she is as unhappy as I am, and cannot do anything to help me. But can any one do that so long as papa is against us? I can only hope that he will be kinder when he finds out that I cannot obey him. Dear Frederick, I seem to be doing wrong whichever way I act. Papa stands on one side of me, and you on the other, and I am pulled both ways at once. I will be true to you, indeed, indeed I will, but if I had some one to counsel me I should feel happier. God bless you, dear Frederick. With all my love, believe me to be always AGNES. yours.

From Frederick Parton, New Zealand, to C. Haldane, Esq., Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park.

Dear Sir,—I am in receipt of your letter, and I deeply regret the risk I run in adding to your displeasure when I say I cannot comply with your desire. It was wrong, I admit, in the first instance, to enter into an engagement with your dear daughter without your knowledge, but my sense of self-respect revolts against the opinion you express of my behaviour. On the occasions I met your daughter in London you were abroad, and my love for her grew and fastened itself upon me unaware. If you had been in London I think it certain that I should have spoken to you on the subject, and I might happily have succeeded in convincing you that an alliance with your family would have been neither discreditable nor dishonorable to you; but you were far away, and I had no opportunity of meeting you. I do not seek to excuse myself; whatever blame attaches to this unhappy affair is mine alone; but what I did was not deliberately done; my feelings hurried me on until words were spoken which cannot be recalled. May I appeal, dear sir, to your recollections of yourself when you were young, when a man's judgment is the slave of his heart, and feelings are involuntarily born within him which he cannot resist? I intended, and intend, to do nothing dishonorable. There is no difference in our rank, and I beg you to excuse me when I say that money cannot confer distinction. I love your daughter truly and devotedly, and it would be the aim of my life to make her life happy. have come to this distant land in the hope of bettering my fortune, so that I might be able to offer her a home befitting her station. Up to this day I have not been successful, but fortunes are being made all around me, and I have not lost the hope which brought me here. You ask me to give up your daughter, and with all respect to you my answer must be that I cannot do so unless she bids me. Sustained by the belief that her heart is mine I shall live on the hope that time may soften your feelings towards us, and that the happiness to which we look forward may yet be ours.—I am, dear sir, faithfully yours,
FREDERICK PARTON.

From Frederick Parton, to Miss Haldane, under cover to Miss Rachel Diprose, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park.

My darling Agnes,—What shall I say to you—how shall I write? If it were not for the last lines in your dear letter I should despair, but while we are true to each other there must be light in the future which we may hope will shine upon us when our trials are happily ended. And still I cannot help reproaching myself for being the cause of your difficulty with your father. Had I been silent you would have been spared your present unhappiness. Your father wrote to me in anger, and I have replied to him, temperately I trust. My darling, I say to you what I said to him—I cannot give you up unless you bid me. To spare you a sorrow I would sacrifice my life, and gladly would I take all this suffering upon myself if it were in my power. You say you seem not to have a friend except your good maid Rachel. Do you forget my father? He is the noblest, the truest of men, and there is nothing you could call upon him to do that he would shrink from doing. Heaven forbid that I should counsel you against your father, that I should ask you to forget a daughter's duty. You have promised him not to marry me without his consent, therefore, whether we ever come together rests with him. He should be content with this promise, knowing that we must both abide by it. The misery of my position is that I am no farther advanced than when I first landed in this colony. If I could go to him with fortune in my hands he would surely relent; it is money only that separates us. If I could win it—if I could win it! I will nerve myself my darling, I will work with all my strength, hoping for the best. I shall say to myself, "Agnes loves me, my dear Agnes loves me!" and with this talisman to strengthen me I shall struggle on, praying for success. Your prayers are with me, I know. Heaven will listen to our prayers, for they spring from faithful hearts. If I could only be near you—if I could only see your dear face! But I must not, I will not repine. I sometimes think, "If my dear girl were poor there would be no difficulty; she would be equally dear to me." So that you see there are circumstances in which poverty would prove a blessing. But it is useless speculating in this fashion; what we have to contend with is not what might be, but what is, and I must be hard and practical, for your sake and mine. My darling, to the last hour of my life I will be true and faithful to you. I shall ever be what I was from the first moment I saw you.—Your faithful lover,

FREDERICK.

From Louis Redwood, Esq., Queen Victoria Mansions, Westminster, London, to C. Haldane, Esq., Brevoort's,

New York, U.S.A.

My dear Haldane,—What the devil has sent you off to America so suddenly, and why did you not ask me to accompany you? Here I am just arrived from Nice, after a cursed bad time at the tables, (dropped eighteen thousand in three days; very refreshing), with a little imp in petticoats to make it worse, to find the Haldane bird flown without having the grace to offer the shelter of its wings to its best friend. But perhaps the said wing is sheltering something more attractive than a man of the masculine gender. What is it, Haldane? Another little affair? At your age too! I am ashamed of you. I am tempted to turn over a new leaf myself. "The devil was sick," et cetera, et cetera. Didn't relish leaving my bullion behind me at Monte Carlo, and the aforesaid petticoated imp has been playing high jinks with yours truly. I'm tired of her tantrums and have made up my mind to settle down. Honor bright. It will be a change—a fresh experience—to have someone tied to a fellow he can't shake off with a cheque. This is leading up to what follows; opening up the case, as the lawyers say.

Talking of lawyers, there it is, you see? I'm a devilish clever fellow to introduce the firm so deftly. Lamb and Freshwater, Bedford row. We know those chaps well; they've made a fortune out of me and mine, but I must do them the justice to say that I never got into a difficulty they didn't get me out of. But that's not the point, which is, mortgage. Chudleigh's a pretty place, but I don't want to foreclose. I'd sooner it fell to me in an amicable way,

and for five weeks out of the fifty-two it would do, with the right sort of spirits about one. Not a bit of good without a pretty hostess to do the honors. You're of a shrewd breed, and can guess what's coming. Fact is, I'm tired of

waiting, as the song says.

Lamb & Freshwater, the dear (the very dear) solicitors, pointing to the mortgage deeds, murmur, "One hundred and twenty thousand!" which you will admit is a good round sum, and insinuatingly ask me, "What is to be done?" That's the rub, Haldane. Am I in want of the money? Do my last pair of boots require soleing and heeling? I think not. My thieving valet has not called my attention to the state of my wardrobe, so I infer I am still presentable. My bank book's all right, and the manager receives me with smiles. I am so beastly rich, you see. Then why do I lug in the trifling sum you owe me? Not the only account between us—excuse my mentioning it, but my back's up. I'm not going to be trifled with much longer. It wouldn't take the twentieth part of the time to tell you all this (and more to come) that it does in writing it down fairly and squarely, but if you will run away when you're wanted I'm bound to grind it out on paper. There's that other sum you want paid into your bankers before the end of the half-year. I'm the most complaisant fellow in the world; I can spare it, and you shall have it, but you must give me, besides the moderate interest, another sort of quid pro quo. I want a sweety, Haldane, and I want it all the more because it's been promised me so long, and as matters stand it is just as far off to-day as it was at the beginning. (See Prayer Book.) I am sick of playing patience. There's a ripe peach on your wall, and I'm growing dangerously savage. Plain writing's the order of the day. Therefore, boon companion and friend of my soul, take timely heed. A nod's as good as a wink.

I cannot recollect that we have ever come to a perfectly formal understanding as to this very lovely and luscious peach. In friendly conversation I have pointed to it and spoken about it, and your pleasant answer has been "Gather it, my dear Louis; I give it to you freely; con-

sider it yours." Consider it mine! But there it hangs. I have wooed it, coaxed it, tempted it, paid incense to it, prostrated myself before it, and there, I repeat, it hangs upon your wall for any hands to pluck when it is in the humor to say, "I am willing;" but to me those words have never been spoken. My dear Haldane, you must put pressure upon your peach, you must exercise authority, or—take the consequences. In plain set terms I ask for your fair daughter's hand. It is yours to command, hers to obey, mine to worship and endow. Do not doubt that I am prepared to be very liberal in the settlements. A longer delay will be dangerous. Act instantly and firmly, and your difficulties are over. We will kneel at your feet, and you shall give us your blessing. We shall make a pretty couple, and you will gain in me another child whose virtues you have already appreciated. My wife shall work you a pair of slippers, or buy them ready made, and in your old age you shall have a corner by our fireside. Could any man be more filial?

I must request you to reply to this letter without delay. Lamb & Freshwater are getting impatient, and a simple fellow like myself must submit to be guided by his legal advisers. If you take my advice you will come home very soon; your presence may be required. Meanwhile I subscribe myself, prospectively, your dutiful son-in-law.

LOUIS REDWOOD.

Cable Message, from Haldane, New York, to Redwood, London.

I write to my daughter by this mail, ordering her to receive your addresses. Letter to you, also, by this mail. Shall be home in four or five weeks.

From C. Haldane, Esq., New York, to Louis Redwood, Esq., London.

My dear Louis,—Were I inclined I might quarrel with you for the tone of your letter, but my feelings for you are entirely friendly, and you should be satisfied by this time that you have my cordial consent to your proposal. Agnes

is very young, and girls of her age are inclined to be coy, therefore you must not be too impatient. I will leave it to your discretion to speak or write to her upon the receipt of this letter (I am writing to her by the same mail), or to wait till I return to England. You are generally inclined to follow your own bent, and I have no doubt you will do so in this instance; therefore, I do not advise you. As to the money matters between us I rely upon the assurances you have given me that I shall not be pressed or harassed. I have had bad luck for a long time past, and for my sonin-law that is to be to play the Shylock would be altogether too bad, in other words infernally unfilial. Lamb and Freshwater be hanged; you are the captain of the ship. By the way, I said in my cable that I should be home in four or five weeks. It might be six. Restrain your impatience, my dear Louis; Rome was not built in a day, and your experience of women must have taught you that they are often difficult to manage. Pay that money into my bank as soon as possible; rolling in coin as you are (there can be no possible question of inconvenience.) You lucky rake! What would I not give to be in your shoes?—Yours C. HALDANE. truly,

From C. Haldane, Esq., New York, to Miss Haldane, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park.

My dear Daughter,—I am about to write to you on a very serious matter, and you must understand that I expect a dutiful compliance with my wishes. We have already spoken together on the same (subject,) and your obstinacy has deeply wounded me. After all I have done for you I have the right to command, but I would prefer that you should give a willing consent to my wishes.

Mr. Louis Redwood, a gentleman and a man of honor, has formally proposed for your hand, and I have consented to your union with him. He has shown you constant attention, and his devotion is a guarantee that he will make you a good husband; added to which I approve of him. In the last conversation you and I had on this subject I disputed your right to oppose me in a matter upon which I am

so much a better judge than yourself. You are very young, and very inexperienced; you know nothing whatever of the world and of the traps which designing men set for a lady of your birth and position. You must be guided by me; it will be for your good; you will confess it by-and-by. Mr. Redwood is of a suitable age; he moves in the best society; he is good-looking and enormously rich. My estates will be settled on you; you will have a house in London, with surroundings which cannot fail to make you happy; and your affianced (I, your father, to whom you owe obedience, regard him as such) will gratify every wish

of your heart. What more could any lady desire?

You have spoken to me of some girlish fancy to which you have unreasonably clung. If you cling to it still you must set it aside. I will not blame you for it; such fancies are part of the experiences of most young people, and they are always forgotten and smiled at in the future. Life has more serious duties, and you must perform them, as every other person does. There is not a lady in England who would not joyfully accept the offer which Mr. Redwood makes to you. He does us great honor, and you are most fortunate to have won the love of such a man. I have, I think, said enough to induce you, if you need inducement, to listen to him favorably, and to make me happy. Fully convinced that you will offer no further obstacles to an alliance upon which I have set my heart, I am, my dear Agnes, your affectionate Father,

C. HALDANE.

From Louis Redwood, Esq., Queen Elizabeth Mansions, Westminster, to Miss Haldane, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park

My dearest Agnes,—I have your father's sanction to address you on a subject very dear to me, and I hope to you. I flatter myself that you can have mistaken my attentions as little as you can doubt my devotion. As a writer of love letters I do not think I should shine; as a husband I should. I lay my heart at your feet; open Paradise to me, by consenting to become my wife. This is not so bad for a commencement.

You shall have everything you wish; I will refuse you nothing; an establishment in town, in the country, on the continent. If you want to stop at home, we will stop at home; if you want to travel, we will travel; you shall command me in every way. I dare say you know I am rich, for which I thank my stars: spend my money for me, and make me a happy man. I might have waited till your father returned home before making my proposal, but I could not stand the delay. I am burning to know my fate; do not keep me in suspense. Kindly accept the accompanying trifles. I have selected them with the greatest care, but if the stones and settings are not to your liking we will have them altered. I am urging your father to hasten home; I want him to advise me about carriages and horses. You will have to come to town when he returns, and your taste shall be followed in everything.—Your devoted LOUIS REDWOOD. lover,

## From Miss Haldane to her Father.

My dear Father,—I am very, very sorry that I cannot do as you wish. Before you left home I told you so, and I am not changed. I do not love Mr. Redwood, and I cannot marry him. Were my heart not engaged I could not accept him; in my own defence I am forced to say that I do not believe him to be a good or a sincere man. I may be wrong, but I cannot help saying what I feel. My dear father, his riches would not make me happy; I would not mind being poor with the man I love; with Mr. Redwood, my life would be a life of deceit and misery. I beg you to forgive me; the thought of your displeasure makes me very wretched; I will do anything you ask, but this I cannot. I have already promised you that I will not marry without your consent, and if you withhold it I must remain as I am. My dear father, I write in love and duty, but I cannot be false to the dictates of my heart.—Your loving and unhappy daughter.

AGNES.

From Miss Haldane, to Louis Redwood, Esq. Dear Sir,—I feel honored by the proposal you have

made to me, and regret that I cannot accept it. I have told my father so in a letter. Trusting you will meet another girl who will be worthier of you than myself, I remain, yours respectfully,

AGNES HALDANE.

From Louis Redwood, Esq., London, to C. Haldane, Esq., New York.

Dear Haldane,—I enclose your daughter's reply to my proposal, and I hope you will like it. If I'm not mistaken you will find it an expensive piece of paper. Short and sweet, is it not-damned short and sweet? But I'll make it short and sweet for you if she doesn't take it back-and pretty quick, too. I sent her a model of a love letter; took me almost a day to put it in form; I worried over it like a terrier; and this is the answer she treats me with. She doesn't even condescend to mention a case of jewels I sent her—cost me over a thousand pounds—but despatches them back to me without a word, the case unopened. I know it hasn't been opened, by a little trap-mark I set on it. I'm not much of a Christian, Haldane, any more than you are yourself. When I get a slap on one side of my face I show my teeth, and those who abuse me live to repent it. What do you think? Lamb & Freshwater have been on to me again about that mortgage; and you'll receive a notice from them by this mail. Funny coincidence, is it not? I have not paid that money you ask for into your bank-that's funny, too. Fact is, I'm riled.

Do I give up the hunt? No—and here's your chance, your only chance, if all you've told me is true. Perhaps you'll talk of my throwing you over. I don't throw you over, but you know what the inducement has been. And now the prize is to be snatched from me. Very well. I'll have some satisfaction for it; I'll sell you and your daughter up. See how she likes that. I'm not blind or deaf, Haldane; there's another fellow in the way. If you aren't clever enough to shunt him off, take the consequences. It's quite as much your affair as mine. I'm playing the magnanimous in not retiring from the field at once, and leaving the affair entirely

in the hands of Lamb & Freshwater, but I confess I don't like to be beat, and I'll hold on a while longer. Lamb and Freshwater inform me that the mortgage must be paid off or renewed this very day two months. If you can't cash up you know my terms for renewal, so be wise in time and bring your precious daughter to her senses. If you are not a fool you will take the first steamer home, and I wish you joy of your reflections during the voyage.

—Yours most unamiably, LOUIS REDWOOD.

Cable Message from Haldane, New York, to Redwood, London.

Shall be in London in a fortnight. Meanwhile have written to my daughter. It will be all right. Lamb and Freshwater's notice mere formality, I suppose.

From C. Halaane, Esq., New York, to Miss Haldane, Manor

Hall, Chudleigh Park.

Agnes.—You have distressed me terribly. Mr. Red-wood's offer must be accepted—must, I say. There is no alternative. You compel me to disclose what I hoped to keep always from you. I have been a good father to you, and wished to spare your feelings, but I must now tell you

the plain truth.

For years past I have been in difficulties, and only one person has known of them, only one person has stepped forward to save me. That person is Mr. Louis Redwood. He has advanced me large sums of money, which have been spent in maintaining my position, and yours. When he first assisted me you were a child, and there could have been no thought of lovemaking in his mind, but as you grew up he learnt to love you. The kindness he showed towards me was perfectly disinterested, and had you not been in existence he would have continued to be my friend. But you have angered him, and the child I nourished is now my enemy. My fate is in your hands! if you do not accept Mr. Redwood I shall be a ruined man. You must perform your duty. What you say about your heart being engaged is childish and absurd; what you say about Mr. Redwood

is ridiculous and unjust. He will make you a good husband; he will give you a position that titled ladies will envy. You have no choice in the matter; the attitude you have assumed is unwarrantable. No man would quietly endure the insult you have passed on him. Understand from me that I will allow no further hesitation or evasion. An honorable man has made you an offer which any girl would be proud to accept, and for some stupid sentimental reason you refuse it. I command you to write to him instantly, retracting that refusal. He is willing even now to prove himself our best, our only friend. If you fail in your duty I discard you. My home is no longer yours if you are rebellious; you must seek one elsewhere. Upon receipt of this letter you will send me a message by cable, to allay my anxiety. I enclose a form, so that you will have no excuse for neglect. Two words will suffice: "I consent.—Agnes." Then you will have done your duty to me and to yourself, and you will live to bless the choice you have made. Your father, C. HALDANE.

Cable Message from Miss Haldane, Chudleigh Park, to C. Haldane, Esq., New York.

I cannot, I will not consent. I have heard something of him which fills me with horror.

AGNES.

From Rachel Diprose, Manor Hall, Chudleigh Park, to

George Millington, Shepherd's Bush, London.

My dear George,—Whatever is going to become of us I have not the least idea. Everything is at sixes and sevens, and a good deal worse than that. My dear young lady is in a dreadful way, and goes about like a ghost. Her father is here, and so is that hateful wretch, Mr. Redwood, and I wish they were both at the other end of the world or at the bottom of the Red Sea, I don't care which, so long as they were not near us. I want to know why some people are allowed to live. I am sure it is wrong, and if I had my way I would make it right. Yes, I would. Now, what do you think of me? You had better give me up, George, dear.

Ever since my young lady got that letter without any name to it, telling her such dreadful things of Mr Redwood and that girl Honoria, she has not been like herself. What a monster he is—and is she any better? There! I haven't patience with things! Before that my dear mistress was worried enough. Her sweetheart over the seas, there was something the matter with him, and she sighed and cried till she made me cry and sigh too; and now her father has come home, and that Mr. Redwood with him, and between them they are fretting my young lady's life out of her. Her father sends for her every morning, and keeps her with him locked up in his study for an hour and more, and when she comes away she has hardly strength to stand. And that Mr. Redwood smiles at her, and gives her flowers she never looks at, and they go out riding, the three of them, and she comes home as white as a sheet-Oh, when he is having dinner I wish a bone would stick in his throat and choke him, the wretch, that I do!

To make things worse, her sweetheart across the seas can't do anything to help her. He went away to make his fortune, and it seems as far off as ever. I almost think that Mr. Haldane and Mr. Redwood know this, and are rubbing their hands over it, as they would over anything that would make anybody unhappy. But, oh, George, dear, what is to be done? I can't think of anything; can

you?

What a foolish, foolish question! What can you or anyone do while those two fiends—yes, George, fiends—go on as they are doing? They're the masters, and between them they'll break my dear young lady's heart unless—Well, unless something. There's a saying that Heaven helps those that help themselves. I keep thinking of that, and if the worst comes to the worst I shall have something to say about it. All I've got to say to you is, don't be surprised at anything that occurs. We never know what we can do till we are put to it. Not that it will bring you and me any nearer together. I'm speaking in riddles, you'll think. I can't help it—I can't help anything. But don't let them think they can buy me over, try as hard as they

like. They're a clever pair, the wretches, but I have got my wits about me, and I intend to keep them, for my dear mistress' sake. She is that distracted that she loses her head sometimes, and wants someone to think for her. Well, I'll do that.

Yes, they are trying to buy me over. Mr. Haldane comes to me first—of course when I'm alone—and says that my young lady does not appear to be very well, and has got some nonsensical notion in her head about a young man far away, and what a stupid thing it is, and what a lovely time there is before her with Mr. Redwood for a lover and a husband, and how beautiful it will be for me when I'm living in London with my lady, and going to the theatres, and having all sorts of pleasures, and how there's a gold watch and chain, and two beautiful silk dresses waiting for me on the day she is married at a grand church in London, with heaps of bridesmaids, and orange blossoms, and white veils, and all that, and all that, till there's a regular buzzing in my ears. But I press my fingers to them, and the humming goes away, and I curtsey and say I hope my young lady will be happy, and Mr. Haldane says there's no doubt of that if she will be advised by those who love her best and know best what is good for her, and I must mind and not forget the gold watch and the silk dresses and all the other temptations to turn a poor girl's head, and here's a sovereign to put by towards buying something for the time I'm married myself, when there'll be a handsome wedding present for me from Mr. Redwood and Mr. Haldane—and then my young lady's father goes away, smiling, thinking he's made it all right with me. It's very confused, I know, George, dear, and it all seems mixed up like, but I'm excited and worried, and the words came rushing out so fast that they tumble over each other, and down they go on paper as fast as they come. My George is clever, and could make it out, even if it was more mixed up than it is. But if Mr. Haldane thinks he has bought me over, and that I am going to do anything to make my young lady marry that detestable Mr. Redwood, he's reckoning without his host. No; not for fifty gold watches and five hundred silk dresses would I do it, knowing what I know, but I don't tell him as much, for I don't want to be turned away, which they wouldn't mind doing I'm sure if it could help them in their plans. Let her father think what he likes; I'm not going to speak my mind to him though the time may come when I shall be forced to do it. Then Mr. Redwood sneaks up to me and says, "Rachel, you're a sensible girl, and I'll bet a hundred to one you've got a sweetheart, and a lucky chap he is"— (I've my own opinion about that, George)—"and he'll be a luckier on the day I'm married to your mistress, for there's five ten pound notes waiting for you when the wedding comes off." It's all waiting for me, gold watches, silk dresses, and ten pound notes. Enough to turn a poor girl's head, but it doesn't turn mine. I'm not to be bought by Mr. Haldane and Mr. Redwood. My dear young lady can buy me with a smile or a pleasant word. But they can't, if they offer me all the money in the world. If we ever gold watches and five hundred silk dresses would I do it, if they offer me all the money in the world. If we ever marry, George, dear, you're going to have a very foolish wife, but as it's not at all certain that we ever shall marry you needn't worry over it beforehand. Shall I scratch out the last words? No, because I have never deceived you before, and I won't deceive you now. My dear young lady will never, never marry Mr. Louis Redwood, and she has made a promise that she will not marry anyone without her father's consent. It isn't at all likely that he will give his consent to her marrying her sweetheart across the seas, even if he was to come home rich, and as my young lady therefore will never marry at all, neither will I. There it is, in a nutshell. We shall both die old maids. I am so sorry for you, dear old George; but never you mind; there's as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, and there's hundreds and hundreds of young ladies ready to jump at you the moment you hold up your little finger. Good-bye, dear. Give my love to your dear father. As things are, I mustn't send you any.—Your true and loving sweetheart RACHEL DIPROSE. From George Millington, London, to Rachel Diprose, Chud-

leigh Park.

My dearest Rachel.—Your letter is rather confused, but I understand it very well, and I can see clearly how matters stand. You are rather a whirlwind, but I am not so excitable as you are, and when we are married your temper and mine will make a very good mixture. You are inclined to look on the wrong side of things; I am inclined to look on the right side-which is the bright side, you know. It is a great deal pleasanter, and quite as cheap. Father says to me, "Wherever do you get your patience from, George? "From you or mother, dad," I answer, "and a precious good thing it is to have." I never meet trouble half way, and by and by when we're comfortably settled you'll see the beauty of that, for trouble we're going to have our share of; it isn't in nature that everything should run smooth—especially with such a whirlwind as you in the house. My dear Rachel, I am really, really sorry for the unhappy state of affairs at the Hall, and if I could do anything to help sweet Miss Haldane I'd fly to do it. I wish you would tell her so. Not that it will be of any real use, but when anyone is in trouble it does them no harm to know that there are people who feel for them. You will have to be careful, Rachel. I see what a comfort you are to Miss Haldane, and you mustn't do anything that would put it into her father's head to turn you away. He is not a gentleman I have any liking for, and as for the other, Mr. Redwood, I shouldn't at all object to the opportunity of telling him what I think of him. That is never likely to happen, moving in different stations as we do, and I say so to you only to prove how thoroughly I agree with you in all you say about him. About your dying an old maid, Rachel—no, Rachel, I set my face against it; I can be as determined as you, and determined I am to marry you, if not this year, next, if not next year, the year after, So don't let us have any more talk about other young ladies ready to jump at me. They may jump; I shan't hold out my arms to catch them.

Father tells me everything, of course, and he told me

what you said to him at Chudlegh once about Mr. Haldane owing money to Mr. Redwood; the landlord of the "Brindled Cow" let something drop, too, about that; and now I can tell you what father has found out through his old partner, Mr. Barlow. Mr. Redwood has got Mr. Haldane under his thumb, and can sell him up at any minute he pleases. That's the secret of their friendship, and of their both trying to force Miss Haldane into the match. There is no occasion for my expressing my opinion of a man of Mr. Redwood's character—the worst of characters, Rachel -persecuting so sweet a lady; I can only pity her with all my heart, and wish her well through it. It is hard to say, and harder to see, how things are going to turn out. As for advising, that is out of the question. Father and I have no right to advise—only father wants me to say this. We have a home, not very grand, certainly, but very comfortable, and there it is for you and your young lady, if ever you should be driven to London for a time. Of course it is a wild idea, but father says, "Just you put that down, George," and I have put it down. While things are in this state, Rachel, I hope you will write to me more often, for I shall be very anxious to know how they are getting on. Remember always, if you do happen to think of anything I can do just let me know, and it shall be done.

I am at work on the most beautiful dressing table you ever saw, all of inlaid wood, with your name, Rachel, inlaid on the top. I am getting quite a houseful of furniture ready for us. I don't like the delay, you know well enough, but it gives me time to make a lot of things that will come in handy by and bye. Only Rachel, my dear, don't keep me waiting too long. Father sends his love to you, and his respects and sympathy to Miss Haldane. As for me, I can't find enough love to send you, but all I have is yours. Send me another letter very soon. Your faithful sweetheart,

GEORGE.

From Rachel Diprose, Chudleigh Park, to George Millington, London.

My dear old George,—You are a dear good fellow, that

you are. After I posted my last letter to you, I said to to myself, "Whatever will George think of me for writing such a hotch-potch?" for so it seemed to me when I sent it off. But I was worked up into a regular pitch of excitement, and there's no one I can speak my mind freely to but you. It is such a relief. I know you are patienter that I am, and better tempered, and nicer altogether, but if things should ever happen to come right I'll try to make it up to you, I will, indeed, George, dear. The idea of your calling me a whirlwind! but I am one, I feel like one. If I could whisk my young lady up now, and carry her over the sea to her sweetheart there, and see the wedding-ring on her finger, it would be done without waiting to consider about it. That's the way a foolish woman talks, isn't it, George? If she could do this, if she could do that, as if wishing was the least bit of good in the world? O, if I was a man! There I am, at it again. But if I really was a man, I should lay hands on Mr. Redwood; I shouldn't be able to help it. There's another one here, too, that I'd lay hands on, but him I can keep at a distance, and give as good as he brings. I mean Mr. Simpson. He's been at it as well, about Miss Haldane marrying Mr. Redwood. "What a good thing it would be for all of us," he says to me? "Speak for yourself, Mr. Simpson," I say to him. "It isn't for you, and it isn't for me, to interfere with our betters."
(As if, when I said "our betters," I meant it!) "O," says
Mr. Simpson, "you're against it, too, are you?" That put
me on my guard. "Against it!" I says. "Why should I
be against it? All I mean is, that if I was a young lady or gentleman I'd take it as an impertinence for a servant to mix himself up with my affairs. I know how to hold my tongue, Mr. Simpson; suppose you take a lesson from me." "Of course I'll take a lesson from you," he says. "Where could I find a better schoolmistress?" Don't you think anything of it, George. Mr. Simpson is in service here, and I'm obliged to put up with him, but I know how to keep him at a proper distance. I daresay he'd be more familiar if I encouraged him, but I don't give him a chance.

If anything, George, dear, things are worse than when I sent my last letter. Mr. Redwood goes about as smiling as ever, making presents almost every day to Miss Haldane, presents that she never looks at unless she's forced to; but Mr. Haldane is looking very black. Yesterday morning I was going through the passage when I heard Mr. Haldane say to my young lady, "You have made up your mind to ruin me." "No, papa," my young lady answered; "only I will never, never—" That is all I heard; I didn't dare to wait because the door was open, and they were talking close to it. Last night, it was settled that were talking close to it. Last night it was settled that there was going to be a grand ball here, and that any number of ladies and gentlemen were to be invited. My young lady looks very white over it, but to-day I think the invitations went out. Mr. Haldane wanted his daughter to write them, but she wouldn't. How is it all going to end? What a good, patient boy you are to make all those beautiful things that will never be used, for a house that will never be furnished! And what a miserable creature I am to say such things to you, when you are doing all you can to please me! I can't help it; I can't, indeed. The sight of my dear young lady's unhappiness drives me into saying things I should never dream of. I will write to you again about the ball. I told Miss Haldane what your father said about your house, and she asked me to thank you, and said I ought to be a happy girl; and I should be, George, dear, if she was. Good-bye, dear. With love to you and your father. Your true sweetheart,

## From the Same to the Same.

My dear, dear George,—The ball comes off the day after to-morrow, and for the last three days the Hall has been upside down. It is to be the grandest affair that has ever been given here, and any number of carriage people are coming. There are three dressmakers in the house, making a dinner and ball dress for my young lady, and she doesn't take the least interest in what they are doing. I tell you what her father and Mr. Redwood are doing, George. They are driving her into a trap. They don't say

a single word to her about her white face and her unhappiness, and I can see that it is part of their plan. I am writing this letter late at night, after everybody but me is in bed. While I was attending to my young lady, combing and brushing her hair, she said to me, all at once, with the tears running down her face, "Rachel, what am I to do?" I did not know how to answer her at first; then I said quite boldly, and, without waiting to ask myself whether I was right or wrong, "I should do, my dear mistress, what my heart tells me to do;" and a minute afterwards I was frightened at what I'd said, because it was like setting her more and more against her father. Presently she said "If I were dead it would be better for them." I burst out crying myself at this, and then she forgot her own trouble, and tried to comfort me. That made me stop crying, because it showed me what a selfish wretch I was. What is my trouble compared to hers? I've got a sweetheart that's true to me, and nobody is trying to make me false to him, It made my heart ache to hear her say, "If I had a mother she would advise and help me; but I feel, I feel I am doing right. To marry such a man—I would sooner be carried to my grave! Is it possible my father can know?" Quite possible, thought I, but I said nothing. When she was in bed she asked me to sit by her a little while, and she put out her hand-Oh, George, it was as if I was the only, only friend she had! "You will not leave me, Rachel?" she said. "No, my dear mistress," I answered. "I will never leave you. I will work my fingers to the bone for you!" And I will, George, willingly, if it ever comes to it. She kept very quiet, holding my hand—think of her sweetness and goodness, George, dear!—and then she let it go, pretending to be asleep. But she wasn't; she did it for me, fearing I might be tired, so I didn't go away at once, but waited a little longer, and smoothed her pillow, all wet with her tears, and went softly from her room. My own room is at the top of the house, and the window faces the lawn in front of the Hall. Just now, looking out, I saw two gentlemen strolling up and down, smoking their cigars. They were Mr. Haldane and

Mr. Redwood, putting their heads together for mischief. If I could only hear what they were saying! But what good would it do? There, I must stop, or I shall be writing a lot of nonsense. Good-night, dear old George. Didn't I tell you once you had better give me up, and look out for some girl who won't be such a worry to you. Well, you had better. It is very wicked of me to go on teasing you out of your life. I shall keep on loving you, though; I can't help that, but I'll keep away from you. What the eyes don't see, the heart doesn't grieve at. With true love to you and your good father, I am always your unhappy RACHEL.

From George Millington, London, to Rachel Diprose, Chud-

leigh Park.

My dearest Rachel,—Just received your letter, and write a line before going to work. What nonsense you do talk, my dear girl, about you and me! Give you up! No more than you will give me up. Don't be so low spirited; everything will come right. I can see that things are coming to a crisis with Miss Haldane, and that something of the greatest importance will soon take place. I do sincerely pity her, and I should be a selfish fellow indeed if I did not admire you for your loyalty to her. You are staunch to her; you will be staunch to me. What better proof could I have? Only, my dear girl, if you cannot prevent things you must not let them break your heart. That would be foolish—and not fair to me, because your heart belongs to me. I beg to inform you that it is my property, and you must take care of it. The dressing table is finished, and I am planning a wash stand to match. I must be off; can't afford to lose more than half an hour. With love that will never change and never grow less, Your true sweetheart

GEORGE.

From Rachel Diprose, Chudleigh Park, to George Millington, London.

My dear old George,—You are foolish to be so obsti-

nate, but I must not blame you for it. No other girl would. But, George, what is the use of your going on making things that will never come in use? Isn't it a waste of wood? And to work my name in them, too! That is more foolish still, unless you can meet someone else named Rachel that you would like to propose to; then there would be some excuse for you. But I must not write about myself and you, because you say when I do I write nonsense. No, I don't mean that. It is only that I am trying to write with a light heart when mine is very heavy. I have some very serious news to tell you.

The ball came off last night, and nobody who was there will be likely to forget it. Mr. Simpson says it will get into the papers. Why should it? It is not their business. I suppose the men who write for them are like Mr. Simp-

son, always poking and prying about.

I didn't hear and see everything I am going to tell you, but everybody seems to know all about it. You said that something of the greatest importance would soon take

place. George, it has.

I never saw such a lot of people at the Hall as kept coming all day yesterday. A good many came early, and every room was full. A lot of servants came from London to help. You should have seen the flowers, George. The

place was a perfect bower.

There was a grand dinner at half-past eight o'clock. At half-past seven my young lady was not dressed. She was sitting in her room in her morning dress, and I was waiting by; one of the dressmakers was there as well. "You will be late, Miss Haldane," the dressmaker said. My young lady did not speak, and the dressmaker went away, and came back presently with Mr. Haldane. "How is this, Agnes?" he asked, and his face was white with passion. "Papa," she said—but he stopped her, and sent us from the room. In about five minutes he came out—we were standing in the passage—and said to me. "Go in, and dress your mistress." We both went in, and without Miss Haldane or I saying one word the dressing was commenced. The dressmaker talked; she is married, she told me; I pity

her husband; she has got a tongue. No, George, my young lady did not speak one single word, and my heart was too full for me to open my lips to her. It was a beautiful dress, and it fitted my young lady like wax; there wasn't a bit of color in her face; she was like a lamb going to the sacrifice. But she was thinking all the time; I saw that, and I wondered what was in her mind. About twenty minutes past eight Mr. Haldane knocked at the door, and asked if she was ready. "In five minutes, sir," said the dressmaker. He came again then, and sending the dressmaker away—he is a proud gentleman, and hates a scene—he called Mr. Redwood in. In came that scorpion, with the most magnificent bouquet that ever was seen. He smiled and bowed, and offered the bouquet to my mistress; she did not look at him. "Take the flowers, Agnes," said Mr. Haldane. If a steel tongue could speak the voice would be like his. My young lady turned to him for just one moment, and then took the bouquet. Then the scorpion offered her his arm. "Agnes!" cried Mr. Haldane, and she put her fingers on the scorpion's arm. Then they left the room, and I tidied it up, and the dressmaker came back with the ball dress and arranged it. I went down to the kitchen, and all the servants were talking about Miss Haldane, and saying she looked like a corpse. I held my tongue, and let them talk. I heard that my young lady and Mr. Redwood were engaged, and that the engagement would be announced that night by Mr. Haldane at the ball or the supper. Dinner was over at half-past ten, and my young lady came back to dress for the ball. It was said in the kitchen that she never spoke a word all through the dinner, and that she did not touch a morsel of food. She looked like it, faint, and weary, and sick, and yet with something in her face that I couldn't understand. It was nearly twelve o'clock before she was dressed again, and then the scorpin appeared, this time alone, with another magnificent bouquet, which he offered to her with the same detestable smile and bow. He didn't come into the room, but stood in the passage by the open door, waiting to take possession of her. as if she was his property. She took no

more notice of him than she did before, and it was only when her father came and ordered her that she took his bouquet and his arm. Before she left she whispered to me, "Don't go to bed, Rachel." I did not mean to; I intended to wait up for her, as it was my duty to do, but I think she was afraid she would find herself alone when the ball was over. Don't forget, George, that I didn't see what I am going to tell you; it is only what I heard afterwards, but I am sure it is all true, and exactly as I describe. Miss Haldane danced only one dance, and that by compulsion. The scorpion was her partner. She pleaded illness, and I dare say there were gentlemen who saw she was suffering, and did not press her; but her refaal drove Mr. Haldane into passionate fits of temper which drew attention to him. All this time, as I heard, the scorpion never once showed that he was in any way angry; all that he tried to show was that my young lady was his property. If others had pity for her, he had none. He did not leave her side, and did not dance with any other lady. At about three o'clock in the morning, when the supper room was full of people. Mr. and Miss Haldane and Mr. Redwood being there next to each other, Mr. Redwood said something quietly to Mr. Haldane, and was heard to say, "It is my wish." Then Mr. Haldane got up to make a speech, and everybody was quiet, He asked them to fill their glasses, and when this was done he said, "This ball is given in celebration of an event which I have the happiness to announce to you. It is the engagement of my daughter and Mr. Louis Redwood, and I ask you to drink to their health and happiness." Well, just as they were about to drink my young lady rose, and held out her arms, and they waited to hear what she had to say. She spoke in a very low tone, but they say that every word was distinct. "My father is mistaken," she said; "Mr. Redwood and I are not engaged." They put down their glasses, and looked at each other, not knowing what to make of it. Mr. Redwood never lost countenance. He smiled and said they must have observed that Miss Haldane was not well; the fatigue of the night had been too much for her, and he asked them to excuse her. Then he offered

her his arm to take her to the ball room, and she turned her back upon him, and accepted the arm of another gentleman, but she had not gone two steps before she sank to the ground fainting. She was carried to her room, where I was waiting for her, and in a few minutes she recovered her senses. She remembered perfectly all that had occurred, and when her father came to the room she answered him quite sensibly, and so firmly that I wondered more and more at her. He wanted her to return to the company, but she would not. First he begged, then he stormed, but it was all no use. She would not go back. At last he said, "You cannot be in your right senses; I will talk to you to-morrow;" and bounced away. "Don't leave me to-night, Rachel," my young lady said to me when we were alone. There was no need for her to ask me a second time; I was only too glad to stop with her. So I put her to bed, and as she begged me to do so I lay down by her side, and we were soon asleep. She went to sleep first; I think she was happier because she had made up her mind to something. I got up pretty early, and when she woke I had a cup of tea ready for her. We had breakfast together—she asked me to have it with her—and then a servant came with a message from her father that he must see her at once in her study. "Tell my father I will speak to him here," she said, and when the servant was gone she told me to go to the inner room, not considering perhaps that I could hear every word that passed between them. I did as I was told, and presently her father came to her. "Now," he said, and his voice grated on my ear like the scraping of a knife, "be good enough to explain the meaning of your conduct last night." "I think, papa," she answered, "that you should give me an explanation of yours. Why did you tell the people that I was engaged to Mr. Redwood?" "It is the truth," he said, and she said quiet boldly—it was as much as I could do to keep from clapping my hands—"It is not the truth, papa." "How dare you say that to me," he cried, very furious, "when you know it is my wish?" "I dare, papa," she said, "because nothing on earth can ever force me to marry Mr. Redwood. If you knew what I know

about him you would not wish me to marry him. You would abhor him, as I do." "I know everything about him," Mr. Haldane said. "You cannot, papa," she said. "I can, and do," he said. "You are committing a crime by opposing me." "I should be committing a crime," she said, "if I accepted him. He knows my feelings towards him, and he is a coward for torturing me as he is doing." "He is not torturing you," her father said: "he is my friend and will continue to be my friend." said; "he is my friend, and will continue to be my friend if you do as I wish. You have some silly, romantic notions in your head, and it is time you got rid of them. There must be an end to this nonsense. You do not know what is best for you; I do; and I say you will be a happy woman when you are Mrs. Redwood." "That," said my young lady, "I will never be. I will rather beg my bread in the streets." "It may come to that," said Mr. Haldane. Well, they went on talking, Mr. Haldane fuming and beginner and about remining and about remining and beginner and about remining and about remaining and ab ing, and she keeping firm. At last he said, "Tell me plainly what your objection is to Mr. Redwood?" "I have more than one objection," she said. "Even if I loved him, which I do not, and never shall, he has acted towards a poor girl in a manner so base and dishonorable that I would never again take his hand in friendship." "I asked you to speak plainly," her father said. "Read this," she said, and I heard the rustling of paper, and knew she was giving him the unsigned letter she had received about Mr. Redwood and that Honoria. Everything was quiet while he read it; then he said, "This is the work of a scoundrel who has a grudge against an honorable gentleman. He shall answer for himself." He went away, and came back soon with Mr. Redwood himself. While he was gone I was in a puzzle what to do; I ought to have told my young lady that I could hear all that was said, but I don't mind saying that I was curious to hear the end of it. I dare say I was wrong in remaining where I was, but the mischief is done, and can't be undone; and I don't repent now doing what I did. "Mr. Redwood," said Mr. Haldane to my young lady, "will tell you that the letter is a tissue of falsehoods." "Quite false, I assure you," said Mr. Redwood, in his

smooth voice; "and now we will forget what is past. Why did you not tell me of this letter before? It would have explained what I have never been able to understand—why you refused me." My young lady answered very steadily, but in a lower tone. "My father puts me to shame by bringing you here, and speaking of the letter. I cannot discuss it with you. I have told you repeatedly, Mr. Redwood, that your attentions are distasteful to me. I beg you not to persecute me any longer." "All's fair in love and war," said Mr. Redwood. "That I have proposed to you heaven knows how many times is the strongest proof I can give of my love and devotion. Honor me by accepting my hand and fortune." "For the last time, Mr. Redwood," said my young lady, "I decline your proposal."
"You can't deny," said Mr. Redwood, after a little pause, he was speaking now to Mr. Haldane, "that I have made a good fight of it. I give you twenty-four hours. If you can bring your daughter to reason within that time I stand to my offer. If not, I must leave the matter in the hands of Lamb and Freshwater." I caught the names quite distinctly. Lamb and Freshwater. George, dear, ask your father to tell me who Lamband Freshwater are. They are nice names; they ought to be nice people. I could see without looking—and there was a keyhole handy—the look Mr. Haldane gave my young lady before he left the room with Mr. Redwood. I didn't go back to her at once, and it was lucky I didn't, because her father returned almost directly. "I have very few words to say to you," he said to her. "If you do not consent to accept Mr. Redwood before this time to-morrow I turn you from my house. You will find another home; this will be no longer open to." "I will never marry Mr. Redwood, papa," said the poor young lady. "You have one day to decide," said Mr. Haldane. "I have decided, papa," said my young lady very sweetly. "Forgive me." But he turned away savagely from her, and slammed the door behind him.

This long letter is not written all at once, George. Whenever I could snatch a few minutes I have sat down to it, and there has been a good deal to do, George, dear, and there is something yet to tell that will startle you.

When I went in to my young lady I expected to find her all of a tremble, but I was surprised to see that she was calm. I didn't give her credit for being so brave. There's no knowing what women are capable of when they're put to it. When I was little I used to wish I was a man, but I don't wish that now, and perhaps you don't either, though what's the use of my being a woman—for you, George, I mean—I'm sure I can't say. I am afraid, dear, that we're farther from each other than we've ever been before.

I told my young lady that I had heard everything, and she said she had not thought of it when she asked me to go to the inner room. "But I need not trouble to tell you now, Rachel," she said. "You heard what my father said, and I have made up my mind what to do." Then and there she told me that she was going to leave her father's house the very next morning—that is to-morrow, George—and intended to go to London, and try to live there. "But how, my dear mistress," I asked, "how will you get a living in that big place?" "Oh," she answered, "I can paint, I can draw, I can sew. I can teach. Mr. Millington"—your good father, George-"once told me that there were a hundred ways in London that a young girl can get a living by, and I shall go and try and get mine. Perhaps by and bye my father will forgive me." Now, George, upon this what did I do—what do you think I did? You dear old man, I am sure you will guess. I told my young lady that if she went to London I would go with her, and live with her if she would allow me, and work for her, whether she would allow me or not. The idea of her working for herself! She doesn't know what is before her; I do, although I've never been in London. She wouldn't consent to it at first, she wouldn't as much as listen to it, but I said it would not be right or proper for her to live in London all by herself, and that she must have some one to look after her, and who could do that better than I could? I told her if she refused me I would go without her permission, and live in the next room to hers, and that I would never, never leave her till she was happily settled. And at last,

George, she consented; and she kissed me, and said such beautiful things to me, and we had a good cry together, and so it is all settled.

I am going to run out and post this letter, and I will write to you again before we say good bye to the Hall. Now don't you do anything so foolish as to come here for the purpose of taking us to London. I know that is what you will want to do, but we shall be gone before you come, so wait till you hear from me again, which will be the day after you get this; because, George, dear, I shall write you another letter from Chudleigh, perhaps late to-night, and another when we get to London. I must send you my love, and your father, too, though I don't see what is the good of it.—Your affectionate sweetheart, RACHEL.

From Rachel Diprose, Chudleigh Park to George Millington, London:

My dear old George,—It is all over; we are going to leave Chudleigh Park, to leave the old house; and whether we ever see it again who can tell? I shouldn't wonder if this was the last letter I ever wrote from this part of the country; I shouldn't wonder if the sky was to fall on the top of the earth; I shouldn't wonder at anything. I don't belong to Chudleigh, that's one thing; I came to my dear young lady from Norfolk, you know, and I shall not feel it as bad as others might do in saying good-bye to it; but it's a wrench, George, dear, and because Miss Haldane is in a bad way, I'm in a bad way too.

Her father came to her this morning when I was with her, and said, without ordering me from the room as he always does when he sees me there, "Have you considered what I said to you yesterday?" "I have, papa," said my dear mistress. "What is your answer?" he asked. Then it was my mistress who sent me away, and I went and walked up and down, wondering how it would end, and whether he would have the heart to turn her out of the house. I knew for one thing that she was set not to marry that scorpion, Mr. Redwood; she did not sleep a wink all last night, but I saw in her face, when I helped her to

dress this morning, that she had not altered her mind. She didn't say anything to me about it; there is no need for her to do that now; I can read her like a book. All the servants in the Hall suspected that something very serious was going to happen, but they couldn't say exactly what, and when they asked me, you may be sure I did not tell them. They're a babbling lot, but I know when to hold my tongue. I expect they got to suspect something through Mr. Simpson, who hasn't got his match for ferreting things out. While I was walking up and down in that state of restlessness I can't describe, he comes up to me and says, "Well, Rachel, and how are we this morning?" "My name is Miss Diprose," I answers, "and I'll thank you to name is Miss Diprose," I answers, "and I'll thank you to call me so; and pray who made you a doctor to call me 'we?'" "You're a sharp one," he says. "And how are you this morning, Miss Diprose?" "I'm none the better for seeing you, Mr. Simpson," I says, "and now you've got your answer." "You grow sharper and sharper every minute," he says. "A needle isn't in it with you. I think as there's going to be a change here, you might be a little more amiable to me." "Oh," I says, "is there going to be a change here? You're a Mr. Knowall, you are If I was in your shoes I'd set up as a you are. If I was in your shoes, I'd set up as a prophet, I would." "Some people," he says slyly, upon that, "would like to be in some other people's shoes if they had a chance." I looks down at his, which are enormous, George, dear, and says, "There would be no difficulty in more than one pair of feet getting into yours, Mr. Simpson." I could have clapped my hands for joy to see that I'd put him in a rage; he's that vain of himself and his appearance that there's no holding him; but I wasn't in the mind to be joyful at anything. I was thinking all the time how my dear mistress was getting along with her father, and what was going to happen to all of us. He gets over his temper quick, and says, with a slide of his body—he is for all the world no better than a snake—"Just you remember one thing, Miss Diprose. People may want a friend when they least expect it, and in spite of your sharp tongue you'll find one in Mr Simpson whenever you call upon him."

"If Mr. Simpson's head don't ache till I give him a call." 1 answers, "he's a fortunate man, that's all I've got to say." He tries to give me as good as he's got by saying, "Some people, Miss Diprose, sing one tune to-day and another tune to-morrow. I hold to what I say, and I won't go back on you for treating me so unfriendly. I've got a bit of money in the bank, and I'm as good as a London man any day of the week." I didn't stop to ask what he meant by that, but turned my back to show I didn't want to say anything more to him. In another minute I saw Mr. Haldane and Mr. Redwood walking in the grounds together, and knowing my dear mistress was alone I went up to her. She was whiter than ever, but she didn't speak for a long time. At last she said—O, George, in such a mournful voice!—"I am going away, Rachel," she said, and then I knew that it was all over. "To-day, Miss?" I asked. "Yes, to-day, Rachel," she said. "To London?" I asked. "Yes, Rachel," she said, "to London." "When shall we start, Miss?" I said. Then she began to talk to me again, and said that I had no right to sacrifice myself because she was in trouble, just think of her speaking of because she was in trouble—just think of her speaking of sacrifice to me, George, dear!—and that it was my duty to look after myself. I said I was looking after myself, and that I had thought the matter well over, and didn't intend that I had thought the matter well over, and didn't intend to leave her service. "But I cannot afford to pay you, Rachel," she said. "I'll wait till you can, my dear mistress," I said. "I've saved a little, and I'm not in want. I've a strong pair of arms, and I'm going to work for you and look after you. I should never have a minute's peace if I acted in any other way, so it's no use trying to persuade me." Then she talked of you, and I up and said it was just what I wanted, the chance of going to London, and being near you, and that it wasn't likely I could go alone. "I'm doing what my sweetheart wishes me to do," I said (and don't you contradict me, George, whatever comes of it). "I can be true to him and true to you, and I can't be one thing without the him and true to you, and I can't be one thing without the other. Besides, it was all settled last night." Well, George, dear the long and the short of it is that she had to give

way, and when she confessed that my company would be a comfort to her, my heart was light as light could be. Then I helped her to look over her things. She's got any number of dresses, but she wouldn't take them with her; she chose three plain frocks, and some other bits of dress she can't do without, and I packed them in a trunk, and smuggled in one or two things when she wasn't looking. "There's your jewellery, Miss," I said. Would you believe it, George, she wouldn't take a single thing her father had given her? "But they're yours, Miss," I said, "your very own, to do what you like with." "They belong to my father now," she said, "I have no right to them. There are a few things I bought with my own managethat I think I recent tales with I bought with my own money that I think I may take with me. And I'm not penniless either, Rachel; I've got over twelve pounds in my purse, and that will keep us ever so long if we're careful." My heart bled for her, it did, she spoke so patiently and sweetly. I asked her if there was any friend in London that she would go and ask advice of, and she said there was, and mentioned Mr. Parton's name. Mr. Parton is her sweetheart's father, George, and I was glad to hear that she had thought of him. He is not well off, but that doesn't matter; she will have another friend to stand by her as well as me. When my own box was packed I went to the steward and got what wages were due to me. Mr. Redwood was there, and after I had signed for my money he asked me if I wanted a place. "When I do,' I said, "I sha'n't come to you for one." He only laughed, and said that some of us had a lesson to learn, and perhaps they'd be sorry when it was too late. I don't think that man has a heart.

We are all ready to go, and I am only waiting till my dear young lady comes for me. The train doesn't start for nigh upon two hours, so we have plenty of time. What do you think my poor mistress is doing. Taking leave of her home; going to her favorite rooms and places in and out of the house, and saying good-bye tothem. I wanted to go with her, but she said she perferred going alone, so I came up here to write my letter to you. I feel a little choky myself, George, dear, but I'm not going to give way. A few

minutes ago I looked out of the window, and there was my young lady walking slowly along, looking at the trees and the flowers, with all her heart in her eyes. Not far from her stood her father and the scorpion. She turned towards them, but they never moved. The scorpion took out his cigar case, offered it to Mr. Haldane, and then lit his cigar, with a look in his eyes that made my blood boil. Seeing they would not take any notice of her, my young lady moved slowly away, while they went on talking and smoking. What a pair! I hope a judgment will fall on them some day, and that I shall be there to see it. That's all the harm I wish them.

There was our boxes to take to the railway station. We couldn't carry them, and it was quite as likely as not that orders had been given that nobody was to assist us. So, not to be outdone, I went down to the "Brindled Cow" and told the landlord to send up a carriage for us. How does news fly, George, without anybody saying anything? They knew already in the village that my young lady was going away, and that there'd been a dreadful quarrel between her and her father. They hadn't got the rights of the story, but there was truth at the bottom of it, and that was the main thing after all. The villagers were standing about gossiping and wondering, and when they saw me they came round me and asked a thousand questions. I didn't see why I should make a secret of what was going to happen, so I told them Miss Haldane was going away from the Hall, and that I was going with her. "Where's she going to?" they asked. "To London," I answered. "And when is she coming back?" they asked. "Ah," said I, "that's more than I can tell you. There's one thing I can tell you, and that is that my young lady is an angel." "That she is, that she is," they cried, and more than one cried, "God Almighty bless her!" "Amen," said I, as I hurried back; there was so much to do at the Hall, and I didn't want to keep away from my young lady too long. Everybody in the village loves her, and everybody will miss her. When she's gone the place won't be like the same. For my part, I never want to set

eyes on the village again, unless my young lady is there; when she goes she'll leave mournful hearts behind her. That's more than can be said either of her father or the scorpion. I do believe there would be a general cheer if it was known they were going away and were never coming

back again.

Now, George, dear, don't you go blaming me because I don't call upon you to meet us at the railway station in London. I know what I'm doing, and I'm doing everything for the best. It isn't my own feelings I've got to consult, it's my dear young lady's, and I'm sure she won't want to see strangers while she's in the state she is. I understand her, and she doesn't mind me. She'll cry if she wants to when I'm with her, which she wouldn't if a stranger was by; and I'd give something, I would, if she'd burst out and have it over. And don't you go and think hard things of me for not asking you to help us; if you do I'll never speak to you again as long as I live. Besides, I've got no claim on you now; it's all over between us, for I can't expect you to go on waiting for me for ever; so, George, dear, consider yourself free, and look out for another girl. You won't have any trouble in finding one. You will always be my friend, won't you? There's my dear mistress come for me, and I must wind up my letter. I'll write you another in London, directly we get settled. Good-bye, dear. With a thousand thousand kisses, and with my eyes brimming over, thinking of you and everything, I remain, Your loving and unhappy, RACHEL.

From Rachel Diprose, 5 Warrington street, E.C., to George

Millington, Shepherd's Bush.

My dear old George,—Here we are, settled down for a bit in London, and now I can write to you. I've plenty to tell, but I'll try and make it short, for I know how tiresome you must think my long letters. I can hear you say when the postman knocks at your door, "Oh, here's another letter from that bothering Rachel! She's becoming a regular nuisance!" I do try you a lot, George dear; I

know that; but if it should be my good fortune to have the chance (which it will never, never be, dear), I'll make it up to you, that I will; and nobody in the world can say that Rachel Diprose is not as good as her word. Oh, my dear old George, I don't mean half, no, not a quarter what I say, and any man but you would have been tired of me long ago; but I don't think you are, though I do try you so hard. I do love you, indeed, indeed I do—and that's the

worst of it, isn't it?

Yes, George, here we are in London, settled down in four rooms, two on the first floor, and two on the second. The front room on the first floor is what we call the living room; the back room we use as a kitchen; the two rooms on the second floor are our bedrooms. So we are quite comfortable. At least I am, but oh, what a change it is for my dear young lady! Not that she complains. There she sits while I am writing to you, with some work in her hand she is trying to do, and not making a very good job of it. "I must learn, Rachel," she says, and I don't try to dissuade her, for it's good for her to have something to do, whether she does it right or not; it prevents her from thinking too much. Now I must tell you about our going away from

Chudleigh Park.

There was the carriage from the "Brindled Cow" at the door, and there was the landlord himself to drive it, and the ostler to help down with our boxes. It isn't often the landlord of the "Brindled Cow" drives a customer in any of his traps, and I knew he'd done it this time in honor of my dear young lady, and I was grateful to him for doing so much. My young lady was dressed, and so was I, and when our boxes were on the box I told her that all was ready. "Must we go this minute, Rachel?" she asked, softly. "O, no, miss," I answered; "we've a good quarter of an hour and then we shouldn't be too late for the train; it's always a few minutes behind hand, and the station master knows we're going by it, and he'll keep it back for us." She said nothing to this, but sat by the window, looking out. Presently she started up and went to the door and listened—I knew what for. She was hoping her father would come

at the last minute and tell her she wasn't to go. He was in the house, but she might have stood at the door all day and he would never have come unless it was to turn her out, and at last she went out into the passage towards his room. I followed her at a little distance, in case she might want me; I wasn't at all sure she wouldn't break down, and it was my duty to be near her. She walked, oh, so slowly, and stopped almost at every step, with her hand at her heart, but before she reached his room the door opened and out he came. She put her hands together, and looked up into his face, and then he stopped. "Have you come to tell me," he said, "that you repent your undutiful conduct? Have you come to beg my forgiveness, and to say that you accept Mr. Redwood?" Three or four times did she try to speak before she got her words out. "I have come to beg your forgiveness, papa," she said, "but I cannot accept Mr. Redwood." "Out of my sight!" he cried, and there was a white foam on his lips as he pushed past her and almost knocked her down lips as he pushed past her, and almost knocked her down. I ran and caught her, and she remained in my arms very quiet for a long time. She didn't cry, but she was sighing as though her heart would burst. I didn't say a word, but held her hand. At last she took herself away from me. Seeing how she was suffering, I said to her, "Cry, my dear mistress; have a good cry. It will relieve you. There's plenty of time." "No, Rachel," she said, "it would be wrong. If there's anybody outside they'd see me, and would think my father had not been behaving kindly to me. They must not think that, through me, Rachel. I shall be myself presently." I never would have believed she had such strength and spirit; presently she said in a steady voice, "Now, Rachel, we will go." We went back to her room, and she took some flowers she had gathered, and gave a long look round and then we went slowly and gave a long look round, and then we went slowly downstairs. George, dear, all the servants were outside in the grounds, and they all came up to her and said "Good-bye, miss, and we hope we shall soon see you back again." It was a trial to her, but she bore it bravely. "Good-bye," she said, and she shook hands with them all, and took the

flowers they had gathered for her; and the carriage, too, was full of flowers. I could have kissed every one of them, I could, though they were not all females; I did kiss them that were, for they said good-bye to me as well, and what little differences we'd had at one time and another were all forgotten and forgiven. There was a great St. Bernard dog, my dear young lady's favorite of all the dogs in the place, the dog that was hers and nobody else's, that I knew she'd have given the world to take with her, but didn't dare, for fear of her father. She knelt down and put her arms round his neck and kissed him again and again; and George, dear, in all the people that were standing about there wasn't a dry eye. Yes, there was; I am telling a story. The scorpion was there, standing on the steps of the Hall, as if he and nobody else was master there and perhaps he is. He was smoking, of course; he is always smoking, and I wish he'd smoke himself into a fit that he'd never recover from. He was looking on, cool and smiling, and seemed to enjoy it all. Oh !-but there, I'd better keep myself in; but if there's such a thing as justice in heaven or earth, it will fall on him one day and break his wicked heart. He stood there as cool as you please, and when we were in the carriage he was brute enough to raise his hat to my dear young lady. Chudthat's the name of the dear great dog—was quite close to the carriage, and I thought if I was in my mistress's place I'd tell him to jump upon the scorpion and tear his heart out. And Chud would have done it, too; he understands not only every word my young lady speaks, but every movement she makes, and she'd only to raise her little finger and point to the scorpion, and it would have been all over with him. But she did nothing; she simply looked away. Then the carriage began to move off, and the servants ran after it to the gates of the Park, and there was the lodgekeeper and his wife with more flowers, and every man there had his hat off, and every female servant had her apron to her eyes. Now, George, there were two ways to the railway station, one through the Park, the way we hadn't come, and another through the village; and it was through the

village we were going. Everybody was out, and everybody had a kind word for my dear young lady, and everybody showed how much she was loved and honored there. The rector came out with his wife and children, and they shook hands with my mistress, and asked her to write to them, and whether she promised or not I can't say, but she kissed the children, and we drove away. Not fast, but very slow, and at the door of the "Brindled Cow" a hamper was put into the carriage, and whatever you may say of the land-lady she's a good sort, and I'll never speak a word against her, though she wasn't a favorite of mine. And all the children came out of school, and waved their hands, and cried, "God bless you, lady!"—Oh, George, the world isn't so bad after all; there's plenty of good people in it, and we met a many of them in Chudleigh village. At last we got to the station, and the stationmaster waited on us himself, and we had a carriage all to ourselves, and all the flowers and the hamper were put on the seats; and then came perhaps the best thing of all. At the very moment the train was moving away, the door of our carriage was quickly opened, and who should jump into it but Chud! "Oh, my dear, dear Chud," my dear mistress cried, "you must go, you must go!" She tried to push him out, but she might as well have tried to move a mountain. There Chud lay stretched out, with his great head between his paws, licking my dear young lady's hands, and he never stirred till the train was rattling along. Then he got up, and put his head in her lap, and looked up into her face with his lovely speaking eyes, as much as to say, "I'm going to stop with you, and go where you go, and whoever tries to prevent me had better look out for himself." And they better had, for if ever a faithful heart beat in anyone's breast it beats in Chud's, and he'd lay down his life for his mistress, just as I would myself. What could she say, what could she do? She put her arms around him and said, "Yes, Chud, if they don't take you away you shall remain with me, and we'll never, never part!" It was enough to make one jealous, if one was mean enough. Chud gave me his paw, and we shook hands, if you don't mind my saying so, and here he is now in our room, blinking at me while I write to another faithful heart that I know will say, "Bravo, Chud!" when he reads this letter.

Well, George, we got to London all safe, and then we had to look out for lodgings. "We must find rooms among the poor, Rachel," my young lady said; and that is how we came to live here. We slept here last night for the first time, and before we went to bed I posted a letter to Mr. Parton, and he came to see us to-day. What a gentleman he is—a real true gentleman—and how he comforted my young lady! He wants her to live nearer to him, and perhaps we shall after a week or so. The worst of it is, he's as poor as we are, but it's something to have such a friend in this great wilderness of a city. Oh, George, what a wonderful, wonderful city! I never dreamt it was anything like the place it is, and I should be frightened to be here alone. How thankful I am that I came with my young lady! Chud's all very well, but she can't talk to him as she talks to me, and, noble creature as he is, he can't sympathize with her as I can, and can't help her as I can. I'm not jealous of him a bit; we're in partnership, Chud and me, and we're going to protect my dear young lady between us. She wrote to her father this afternoon, and told him where she was, but I don't expect she'll get any answer from him.

And now, George, I've told you everything, and if anybody had said that I could write such long letters as I've been doing lately I would never have believed him; but there's no knowing what you can do till you try. If you get this letter to-morrow, and care to come and see us, why, George, dear, we shall be glad to see you—at least, my young lady and Chud will; but if you're coming to scold me, and with any idea that you can make me alter my mind, you had better keep away. I'm longing to see you, George, and I know you will be good. I asked my young lady if you could come, and she said, certainly, and that I was to write to you at once, and that she would be glad to see your father as well as you. Give him my love, and if you still care for mine, take it, dear. It is all yours, all I

have to give to any man, for my heart is divided between you and my dear mistress.—Your loving sweetheart,

RACHEL.

From the Rev. Mr. Burleigh, Gabriel's Gully, Otago, New Zealand, to G. Parton, Esq., Westminster Palace road, London.

My dear Sir,—You will be surprised to receive a letter from a stranger in a distant land, but I write to you, the father of a young friend I have made in these parts, for whom, although our acquaintanceship is not of long standing, I have a sincere regard and esteem. I will at once allay any anxiety you may feel by saying that your son Frederick is well enough in health, and that there is nothing the matter with him physically; but I think it proper you should understand how it is with him in all ways. How it was that he and I contracted a friendship I will leave it to him to recount when he and you meet; I will merely say now that there was something of the law of attraction in it, like floating to like and amicably mixing. There are forces that fly from one another, forces that simply require propinquity to become attached to one another; you find it in chemicals. Ours were of the latter order; we are both of us gentlemen, and recognizing the fact, we joined hands. There has grown between us a mutual regard. We have exchanged confidences; we know something of each other's history, hopes, aspirations, and belongings. it is that I know you, although we have never met.

You do not need to be told, dear sir, that you have for a son a gentleman of refined feeling and of honorable impulse. It is impossible for him to descend to a meanness; his is in every respect a noble character, which compels admiration from those who can understand him. But not everyone does this, lacking the qualification, and unluckily he is in a part of the world where the human atoms are not exactly of his order; therefore until he met me—you will pardon me for this piece of vanity—he was somewhat of a forlorn wanderer in these wilds, for wilds they are. Civilization approaches us, but we are as yet familiar with only

its rougher attributes. In the course of time we shall do better. The restless, adventurous spirit brings out many noble qualities; it brings out, also, many of the baser. Unhappily, in the quest of gold, these latter predominate, and mortals commonly brought up, suddenly finding themselves in possession of gold, gravitate the wrong way,—and consequently fall. There is no fear of this with your son Frederick. His honorable and delicate instincts, and the chivalry of his nature are a safeguard. I have touched briefly upon the conditions of life among which we move, only for the purpose of enlightening you. If I judge aright your son would not disclose to you, his father, for whom he entertains an affection of which a father may be proud, the moral difficulties we adventurers from the old country have to contend with. The scum rises to the top, and so it will be for some time to come.

Your son wandered hitherward in search of gold, and it cannot be said that his motive was a sordid one when we take into consideration the goal he had in view. But, my dear sir, your son is an artist in fact and feeling, and he is moving among unfit surroundings. I do not blame him for coming; the end he had in view was laudable and honorable; I content myself with saying that he is out of place in the life we live. Success would have amply justified him; his want of success is a warning. I am myself of an age to be his father. My experience has been wide, and I have had opportunities of studying men; I have seen many lives wasted. It would cause me infinite regret to see your son's life wasted. I cannot disguise my apprehension that there is danger ahead. Men fall into an apathetic state; the more sensitive, the more refined the nature, the greater the danger. What is lacking is rough strength, and this is lacking in your son.

He has worked hard and has not been successful. He has seen other men achieve fortune, and it has passed him by. But he still clung to the mantle of hope. There are few of us who have not had experience of the slipperiness of that garment. It is a will-o'-the-wisp, leading us to the morasses hidden from view. The song we hear is a siren's

song. "Beware," as the poet says. "Trust her not. She is fooling thee." The mischief of it is that we continue to hear of the good fortune attending unworthier men, and we do not pause to consider that it is only of the successes we hear, not of the failures. It is as one to ten thousand.

A forlorn hope, dear sir.

I never met a man with so lofty an ideal as your son. In the purity of his nature there is a womanly touch, and I am sufficiently old-fashioned to reverence, and believe in, the old idea of women, the old idea which refines and exalts, and in which exists the best of influences. We are, I am sorry to perceive, difting into a newer idea which is dragging from its pedestal this beacon light to those who need some better teaching. To this degrading transformation such men as your son will never subscribe. They will die as they have lived, worshipping the pure. All honor to them.

Lately, dear sir, a change has come over your son. Where he was hopeful he is becoming hopeless. Animation is degenerating into apathy. He works hard still, but the hope that sustained him is fading into listlessness. The

light upon the hill is growing faint.

It hurts me to observe this. I ask myself the reason. He is young, he is talented, the best years of his life are before him. Let them not be wasted here, where there is small opportunity for him to work out a befitting career. As I have before indicated he has told me much of himself, of you, of the lady he loves; but I am of the opinion that he has not told me all. A secret grief is preying upon him,

and, I repeat, there is danger.

Let me, dear sir, advise you. Your son is not in his proper sphere amongst us. He has more than talent; he has genius. As an artist he may have to pass through years of struggle, but success will smile upon him at last. He will never meet with it here; all the elements of our outer and inner life are opposed to it and to him. His career should be worked out in a civilized land, where you are. He loves you; he has faith and confidence in you; he can lean upon you; he will find in you a solace for

present failure, a spur to future endeavor. If you can afford it, dear sir, send for him home. He will come at your call. It will be in every respect a gain, for he will never win fortune here. Every day he remains is a day wasted.

If he had the means I would urge him to take the first ship to England; but he has not the means. I doubt if he tells you how poor he is. He is working literally hand to mouth, and sometimes one does not reach the other. If I had the money I would force it upon him, but I am a poor minister, with a small stipend and a young family to devour

it. That is the position exactly.

He is not aware that I am writing to you. I have obtained your address from him in a casual way, and he does not suspect my motive in asking for it. I am thoroughly disinterested in advising you to send for your son, for it will be a grievous loss to me, but I shall gain some compensation by an artful compact I intend to devise, that we shall correspond with each other, he giving me news of the old world, I giving him news of the new. There is much that is novel and interesting in life on these golddiggings, and I shall contrive to make my letters interesting; and in his career at home in the old land I shall take a genuine interest. His letters will be like a breath of sweet air from the familiar scenes of my youth. I said I was disinterested in the advice I give to you. These last remarks make me afraid that it is selfish advice, but I beg you, dear sir, to believe that I offer it solely and entirely in the interests of your son. My wife and children have a very sincere affection for him, and will miss him as much as I shall myself. Believe me, my dear sir, to remain, with great respect, Yours very truly, HENRY M. BURLEIGH.

From G. Parton, London, to Frederick Parton, New Zealand.

My dear boy,—I wrote to you three or four days ago, and here I find myself suddenly writing to you again. There are two special reasons for my taking up my pen again so soon. One springs from a circumstance in which

I have had no hand and taken no part; but it is full of significance for you and me. The other springs from my love for my dear lad. You may, if you please, call one fact and the other fancy, but the latter, my heart tells me, is as tangible as the former. I will speak of the fact first.

My dear Frederick, Agnes is in London, driven from her father's home because she refuses to marry a man whose suit he favors. That this man is a scoundrel I have ample proof, and notwithstanding that I am now upholding a child against her parent, I commend and approve of Agnes' action in the matter. She has come ill provided with funds, and is accompanied by two faithful friends, a noble dog who shall sit to me for his picture, and the maid under whose care you have written to Agnes from New Zealand. She is therefore not without protectors. Her intention is to obtain some employment which will enable her to live until the necessity no longer devolves upon her. I do not seek to oppose this design; it is admirable and praiseworthy, and I trust she will be able to carry it out. From what I have learned the breach between her and her father is not likely to be healed. Bound by her promise to him with respect to yourself she remains true to you, and will wed no other man. She is a sweet and patient lady and I could wish my dear son no worthier wife, if it ever be your good fortune to be united to her. Until we meet, which I trust will be soon, you may depend that I shall look after her to the best of my ability. I will be a second father to her, kinder and tenderer hearted, I hope, than the father who has turned her from his doors. Do not forget, Frederick, that it is partly for your sake that this trial has come upon her, and that your presence would be a great comfort to her. What your future and hers will be it is not easy to say, but there would be a better prospect of its working out happily if you were nearer to her than you are. And this, my dear Frederick, brings me to my second reason for writing to you again so soon.

I dreamt of you last night. I saw you toiling on the goldfields, surrounded by uncongenial companions, living an unhappy life in an atmosphere which must be repugnant to

you, deprived of love and all that makes life sweet. So mournful was your appearance in my dreams that I said, "Can this being, seemingly on the brink of despair, be the dear bright lad that has been the sunshine of my days? My heart went out to you, my dear son, and so great was my trouble when I awoke that I took all your letters from New Zealand, and read them carefully through. Frederick, a light seemed to dawn upon me; not till this morning have I read your letters aright. I read between the lines, and I saw that you were concealing your unhappiness from me, and that there was something prophetic in my dreams. My dear lad, you have worked on the goldfields and have been unsuccessful, and I can see clearly—I am writing now with a prophetic mind—that you have now less prospect of success there than ever. A large fortune is not needed for happiness; a modest competence will serve; and you have even here a brighter chance of gaining the former than where you are now so miserably toiling, away from home, and separated from all who are dear to you. Yes, Frederick, I not only read your letters again, I looked through your sketches and studied them by the new light. My dear lad, there is more promise in them than I ever discerned before; it is in your power to achieve great success, and you know what success as an artist means in England. It means fortune as well as fame—it means happiness—it means Agnes. When you have won distinction her father can no longer hold out. Come home, then, without delay, and work for your reward, come home and win it. My dear lad, I need you-my heart cries out for you; Agnes needs you; when she takes your hand in hers, brightness will come again into her eyes; your presence will lighten her heart. I implore you not to refuse. My heart tells me something more—that you have not the money to pay for your passage home. I enclose a draft that will defray all your expenses. We will work together hand in hand, side by side, and all my early hopes will blossom into flower at my son's success. Surely I need say no more than I have already said. Make all you love happy by not losing a single day after the receipt of this letter. With heartfelt love. I am, ever your affectionate father, G. PARTON.

## THE FOURTH LINK

## CHAPTER XXIX.

It was the night before the Derby, and the Royal Palace of Pleasure was crowded. Every portion of the palatial building with one exception, was packed by an audience drawn from all classes of society, St. James and St. Giles and all their various intermediate grades being fully represented. To these mixed qualities, from the highly intelligent to the idiotically vacuous, the entertainment provided by the enterprising managers of the Royal Palace of Pleasure appeared to be equally palatable. Even the thoughtful-minded sat, and looked, and listened with ap-

parent satisfaction.

The one unoccupied portion of the music-hall was a capacious stage box on the O. P. side, which the habitual humble frequenters of the Palace of Pleasure regarded with some such feelings as they would have regarded the Throne Room of a real Royal palace. That it was engaged and was intended to be occupied some time during the evening was evident from the preparations which had been made for expected visitors. Costly bouquets had been provided, and special programmes printed on satin; and it was observed by the aforesaid habitual frequenters that new chairs with gilt backs had been put into the box. Communicating with this box at the back were two private apartments, completely hidden from the view of the audience, one a dressing room for ladies, the other a saloon luxuriously furnished. At the present moment it was more than usually attractive with a display of glass, and fruit, and flowers; and a promise of revelry was held out by two ice pails containing some dozen bottles of '74 Pommery.

"I say, Bill," whispered a woman to her neighbor in the gallery, "who's a-coming to-night in that box there? Some

swells, I should say, by the looks of it."

"I did 'ear," replied Bill, who was generally supposed to be gifted with witty and sarcastic power, "that her between-July-and-September Majesty the Queen is going to honor us with a visit, for the special purpose of 'earing wot's going to win the Derby. She's got a dollar or two she wants to put on."

"Git out with yer," said the woman. "Wot d'yer

mean with yer between-July-and-September Majesty?"

"Don't yer know?" exclaimed Bill. "You 'ave been nicely brought up, you 'ave. Wot month comes between July and September?"

"August, o' course."

"That's it," said Bill, chuckling. "That's wot they call the Queen—her August Majesty."

"What do they call 'er that for, and wot does it stand

for?"

"There yer floor me," said Bill. "Blest if I know. The next time she comes to see me I'll arks 'er."

"Wot is going to win the Derby, Bill?" asked the

woman, coaxingly.

"D'yer think I'm going to tell yer for nothink?" retorted Bill. "Not me!"

"I'll stand yer a pint, Bill, if yer give me the tip."

"All right, old gal. The favorite's going to win, as sure as yer've got a 'ead on yer shoulders. I ain't going to break my jaw in pernouncing 'is name. It commences with A, and ends with A, and it's got a lot of A's in the middle. There's the straight tip for yer, and don't yer forgit it."

"Ain't Morning Glory got a chance, Bill?"

"Not a ghost of a chance. I got it from 'Arry Lobb—he's in the training stable, yer know. Well, he ses, ses 'Arry, that the favorite's on the job this time, and nothink can stop 'im. I wouldn't tell it to everybody, but I'll tell it to you, 'cause you ain't 'arf a bad sort—put your bottom

dollar on the favorite, and yer'll see 'im romp in. I got four to one a month ago, and now it's a even chance. My brother the Lurcher ses he to me, he ses, 'If I wos you, Bill, I'd 'edge.' 'Edge! Not if I know it. It ain't orfen yer git a certainty, and this is too good a thing to throw away. Wot do you think?" The speaker suddenly paused, and with two curled palms of his hands before his eyes made as if he was looking through a pair of opera glasses. "Well, I'm blest! D'yer see that bloke there in the box, looking at the flowers?"

"Yes, I see 'im, Bill."

"That's Mr. Redwood, as the favorite belongs to. I'll bet that's 'is private box, and that he's got a party coming to-night. He used to race in the name of Larkworthy, but he sails in 'is own boat now. All through a woman, I've 'eerd, as he's nuts on."

"Who's the woman, Bill?"

"You know 'er. Everybody knows 'er. 'Onoria. She's a lucky one, she is—and what a beauty! You'd like to stand in 'er shoes, you would."

"Not my luck! D'yer think it's 'er that's coming to

the box to-night?"

"It's odds on, I should say."

"I am glad, that I am. I've never set eyes on 'er. I'd

sooner see 'er than the Queen, that I would."

"You'll see something when she sets in the box there with 'er back to the stage. She always does that; it's one of 'er tricks, and she's as full of 'em as an unbroken colt. Yes, you'll see something worth seeing. She's a blaze of dymens, she is; the Princess of Wales don't dress 'arf as well."

"And that Mr. Redwood there is sweet on 'er. I can't

say I like the looks of 'im."

"You'd put up with that if he took a fancy to yer. Sweet on 'er! That's not 'arf wot he is. He's mad in love with 'er, and they do say she treats 'im as if he was no better than the dirt under 'er feet."

"Ah," said the woman, proudly, "she knows 'er way about, she does. Good luck to 'er! The minute a woman

gives way to a man he's ready to set 'is 'eel on 'er. I've found that out, and if my time was to come over agin them as made up to me would see the difference. I suppose that

Mr. Redwood gives 'er the dymens she wears."

"He fairly loads 'er with 'em. My brother the Lurcher knows the sister of a servant of 'er'n, and she tells 'im a lot. She's a rum 'un is 'Onoria in more ways than one. Sometimes when Mr. Redwood comes to see 'er she calls out 'erself. 'Tell Mr. Redwood I'm not at 'ome.' That's cool, ain't it?"

"It's the way to serve 'em. He must be very rich to

give 'er all them presents."

"There's no end to 'is money, and he's going the pace,

he is. 'Ere's Baby Biffin. That's yer style!"

A performance on the trapeze had permitted of this conversation without disturbing the enjoyment of the audience, but the appearance of Baby Biffin on the stage put an end to it. Baby Biffin was not a baby; she was a woman grown, of goodly proportions, and her age could not have been less than twenty-five. Nevertheless, she dressed (or, rather, undressed), posed, and conducted herself as a child of tender years, under most extraordinary and unnatural conditions, might by a miracle have done. presumption is a daring one, and is made here merely because a large majority of the audience derived enjoyment from her performance, and saw nothing discrepant in it. She rolled her eyes, she minced and lisped her words, she pouted, she twisted her body, she sang in a fashion by no means infantile. A more complete parody upon the title she had assumed and was known by in music hall circles could scarcely be conceived. In the display of her person she left little to the imagination, her actions were vulgar and coarse, her voice was brassy, her features were thick with paint, her hair (there were several heads of it) hung below her waist. There were rumors of her having entangled a young gentleman of noble lineage, and this was regarded as a distinction, and undoubtedly added to her popularity. During her singing and dancing she carried on a running interlude with vacuous swells in stalls and boxes which fired

them into immense enthusiasm. They laughed, they crowed, they clapped their hands, they wriggled their shoulders, they went into convulsions of delight, they threw flowers to her, they shouted the refrain to her popular song, "I am such a delicate duck, dear boys, Duck, dear boys, Duck, dear boys," and when she finally retired, throwing kisses to them from the tips of her fingers, which were plastered with rings, she was followed with deafening applause. The most harmless and enjoyable contributors to the entertainment in this Royal Palace of Pleasure were those who performed in dumb show—such as a slack rope dancer, an illusionist, and a Japanese, whose manipulation of knives, cups, balls, plates, and other requirements of his art, was marvellous. Of the others who sang and danced at least half were vulgar and coarse, and some indecent. It was not the words to which objection could be taken—though they were, as a rule, silly enough, and utterly devoid of literary merit—but the actions which accompanied them, the suggestive leer or wink, which conveyed into the words an interpretation which should never be allowed in a place of public entertainment.

On this night less attention than usual was paid to the artists. In such places as the Palace of Pleasure the night before the Derby is a night of nights; to many it is the night of the year. The excitement and animation were wonderful; the prevailing dominant thought was the race which was to be run to-morrow. The name of the favorite which Bill in the gallery declined to pronounce was Abracadabra; the name of the second favorite was Morning Glory. Would the favorite win? That was the one burning, the almost vital, question of the hour. A wild delirium raged through the house, from floor to ceiling, from the back of the gallery to the back of the stage. The fevered pulses beat rythmically: Would the—Favor—Ite win? Would the—Favor—Ite win? Everyone answered the question in the affirmative, and yet everyone continued to ask it of his neighbor. There was scarcely a person in all that vast multitude who did not have some direct or indirect interest in the race—a chance

in a sweep, a bet or a share in a bet, from thousands of pounds down to a threepenny piece, and every speaking or singing artist who appeared upon the stage contrived to introduce the subject in a manner agreeable to the audience. In the next private box to that containing a bevy of painted haridans sat a doctor, an author, a soldier, and an editor, all of them famous, and these were discussing Abracadabra. In the stalls were young and old swells "seeing life," youthful members of the aristocracy fresh from college, coming or come into their fortunes, swindling hawks who were tracking them down, a large sprinkling of the demi-monde, lawyers, visitors from the country, and other component parts of fashion and society, and these were discussing Abracadabra. In the pit were respectable working men and their wives, young artisans and their sweethearts a-courting, clerks, shopkeepers, and others of the middle stratas, and these were discussing Abracadabra. In the gallery were shop-boys, work-girls, apprentices, coster-mongers, laborers, and the sweeping of the streets and loding-houses, and these were discussing Abracadabra. Behind the scenes and in the dressing-rooms, up in the flies and down in the cellars, those employed in the Royal Palace of Pleasure were all discussing Abracadabra. Sprinkled every portion of the house, before and behind the foot-lights, were racing men of high ard low degree, owners, trainers, jockeys, stable men and boys, touts, tipsters, bookmakers, and hangers-on, and these, though they were in the swim, as the saying is, were all discussing Abracadabra. They were the oracles of the night, and the words that dropped from their lips were esteemed as pearls of price, and were passed around with profound admiration and respect. When the chances of other horses engaged in the great contest were spoken of, it was in a half-hearted, depreciatory fashion. Some said Morning Glory had a good chance; some said there was a dark horse in the race that would open people's eyes; instances of hot favorites being beaten, anecdotes of Hermit at sixty-six to one, and of other noted winners, were freely circulated; but in the long run they all came back to Abracadabra, whose glory

it was impossible to dim. "It's a moral;" "It's all over but the shouting;" "Have a bit on the favorite;" this was the sum of all the eager talk.

Naturally, when Mr. Louis Redwood was observed in the stage-box, attention was drawn to him by reason of his being Abracadabra's owner, and the whisper went round that he stood to lose a hundred thousand pounds upon his horse. Some said he looked anxious, some said it made no difference to him whether his horse won or not, that he had enough money to sink a ship, and so on, and so on. Opera glasses were levelled at him as he stood in the box, gazing insolently upon the sea of faces.

"That man is a study," observed the doctor, in the private box; "you should make use of him." This to the author, who nodded, with his eyes fixed upon Mr. Redwood's

face.

"He's an infernal scoundrel, I've heard," observed the soldier.

The editor said nothing; as he gazed he was thinking

of men who once were high, and now were low.

A sound of voices and the rustling of skirts in the rear of the private box in which Louis Redwood was standing drew him away, and he went and opened the door.

"Honoria!" he cried, holding out his hands, with an eager light in his eyes. He was not acting a part; for once in his life the man was genuine and sincere.

"Ah, Redwood," said Honoria, in a careless tone. He offered to assist her in removing her wraps, but she said, "No, thank you," in her coldest voice, and turned to a gentleman who had accompanied her into the box, and accepted his assistance instead.

"Good evening, Redwood," said this gentleman

"Good evening, Major," said Redwood.

Major Causton was a middle-aged gentleman, with a long tawny moustache, which he twisted and twisted when his hands were not otherwise employed. The two men eyed each other in differing fashion, Redwood warily, the Major coolly and unconcernedly. Honoria glanced at them and smiled.

"You are late, Honoria," said Redwood.

"Am I?" said Honoria, and stepped to the front of the box. The stage was vacant at this moment, and the superb beauty of the notorious woman drew everybody's eyes upon her.

"There's 'Onoria," said Bill in the gallery.

"Why, you said she'd be ablaze of dymens," cried the

disappointed woman.

There was not a jewel upon Honoria. She was dressed in black; straight, upright, and regally beautiful, she stood in full view of the house, perfectly unmoved and self-possessed. A group of artists in a corner of the stalls scanned her admiringly.
"Cleopatra," said one.

"Zenobia," said the second.

"The Magdalen," said the third.

"Which do you think is the most interesting study?"

asked the author of the editor.

"The story of Honoria," said the editor, "should prove, from the cradle to the grave, to be one of the most remark-

able of the age."

"Don't talk of the grave," said the soldier, "in connection with that lovely creature." He turned red. There was a dangerous magnetism in Honoria, and her eyes were turned in his direction.

"Are you acquainted with her history?" asked the

author.

"Something of it," replied the editor.

"I should much like to hear it."

"Not here and now. Later on I will relate what I know. In some respects it is singular, in others common enough; but it promises developments."

"One can never foretell," remarked the doctor, "how

these women will end."

"As a rule," said the author, "they suddenly disappear, and, after a torpid period, emerge as elderly ballet girls."

"Or as lodging-house keepers," suggested the doctor.

"That will not be Honoria's fate," said the editor. "She will not degenerate into either a lodging-house keeper, or an elderly ballet girl, living upon past glories. Have you seen her ride?"

"Yes, and she is a perfect horsewoman. You open up another possibility. She may become, for a time, the star

of a circus."

"That requires early training, in which respect Honoria is deficient. She is really remarkably beautiful. Nor is it a spring beauty which perishes with the season. If she is careful of herself, her summer and winter will be quite as attractive."

"You are all talking heresy," interposed the soldier, warmly. "I elect myself her champion. She is as good as she is beautiful." The others exchanged a significant smile, which did not escape the soldier's observation. "Where are diamonds found?" he asked.

"In the most unlikely places," replied the editor.
"Washed out of the mire," said the soldier.

"True-in the rough. But this one is polished. You have lived long out of England, and are ignorant of the A B C of certain phases of our civilized life. You will grow wiser by and by, and will think as we do."

"God forbid!" said the soldier, gazing earnestly upon

Honoria.

## CHAPTER XXX.

"Do you like the box?" asked Louis Redwood, as Honoria seated herself.

"It is like other boxes," she answered, with an air of

indifference.

He bit his lip. "I had these programmes printed for you." He put one of the satin slips before her. "The flowers please you, I hope."

"I prefer simple flowers," she said.

"I will think of that next time."

"I would not trouble myself."

"You know the pleasure it gives me to consult your tastes, to gratify your wishes."

"Does it? Major Causton, is that a man or a woman singing?" Her back was towards the stage, and she was surveying the audience.

"An old woman," replied the Major, "in short skirts, casting amorous glances on gilded youth."
"How ridiculous! Causton is very amusing." This observation was addressed to Redwood.

"Very," he said, with a scowl.

"Copy him. You could not do better."

"I will give you lessons, Redwood," said the Major, with a broad grin on his face.

"Thank you; I do not require them."

"You are mistaken," said Honoria, without glancing at him. "You require them badly. Does he not, Major." "I'll not venture to say," replied the Major, goodhumouredly. "I find it difficult enough to steer my own boat."

She laughed aloud, and played with her fan.

"Honoria," said Redwood, in an undertone bending over her, "I will do anything to please you."

"It does not look like it. Pray move away; I don't

wish you to come so close to me."

"You are wearing me out," he muttered.
"Give is up, then," she retorted scornfully. "Try elsewhere."

"I am not to be shaken off so easily," he said.

shall see who will win in the end."

"Yes, we shall. There is, after all, a little enjoyment in a battle of this kind. He took out his cigar case. "If you begin to smoke I shall leave the box." He replaced the case with a savage look. "What is the stable news?"

"Everything is right. The horse was never better in

his life."

"You will win?"

"I can't lose."

"Don't reckon your chickens, Redwood." There was no malice in her tone; they were conversing now amicably

"I reckon these. There never was such a certainty. I've been offered twenty thousand for my book."

"Lucky dog!" said Major Causton. "You win at everything."

"Not at everything," said Honoria. "Eh, Redwood?"

"Don't begin again, or I'll scratch the horse at the last minute."

"You would never dare to show your face on a race-course again if you did," said Honoria. "But if Abracadabra were out of the race what difference would that make to me?"

"I'll tell you what you stand to win on him, if you like."

"Yes, do." From her words it might be supposed that she took an interest in the subject, but her voice betrayed the most absolute indifference.

Louis Redwood consulted his betting-book. "Twenty-

eight thousand pounds," he said.

"And to lose?"

"Nothing. You know that well enough."
"Causton," said Honoria, "how much do I stand to win on Morning Glory?"

"What!" cried Louis Redwood, white with rage.

"A true bill," she said calmly. "I've learn't something of the world, and I play my own game. How much, Major?"

"Thirty odd thou., my dear.

"Stop that, if you please. Not even from you; not even to vex Redwood."

"I throw myself at your feet, lady fair," said Major Causton, undisturbed by the check, "but if you will be so infernally bewitching, what can a poor beggar do?"

"Do you mean to say," exclaimed Redwood, "that you've

been backing Morning Glory without my knowledge?"

"There's no denying it, is there, Major?"

"There's no denying it, lady fair."

"The Major," said Honoria, "has been my commission

"For how long has this been going on?" asked Red-

wood.

"Ever since you began to put me on Abracadabra."

"You must be out of your senses."

"Very much in them, dear boy," said the Major. "Very much in them. Lady fair has brains. Brains! Hanged if the word expresses it. Her intellect is gigantic. There's no stopping her, dear boy. But I'm telling tales out of school."

"I have no objection to Redwood's knowing everything now," said Honoria, smiling on the two men—a smile which caused the soldier in another private box to mutter under his breath, "By heavens, she's bewitching!" Honoria continued: "Make him acquainted with our proceedings, Major."

"Most interesting proceedings. Commenced in Febru-

ary."

"Morning Glory was at twenties then," volunteered Redwood.

"And twenty-fives, dear boy. Lady fair heard a whisper.
A little bird came down the chimney, she said. A pretty

fancy,"

"One of those childish fancies," said Honoria, with composure, gazing steadily at Redwood, "that the children of the poor have. Did you know, Major, that I was once a very poor little girl, and sometimes had hardly enough to eat?"

"You don't say so, lady fair? It is amazing. But what

a romance! You're joking, though."

"I assure you I am not. Even up to the time I was eighteen I did not know what it was to have a sovereign in my purse. I was a very unfortunate young woman."

"You distress me, upon my honor you distress me.

What an infernal hardship!"

"A very unfortunate, simple young woman," proceeded Honoria, very calmly; "I believed everything that was whispered into my silly little ears. I believed in truth, in honor, in faithfulness—I believed even in love."

"More and more like a romance. And did your lover deceive you? Show me the man. I will make an example

of him."

"No; the subject annoys Redwood. He would rather hear about that little bird."

"It came down the chimney, she said, Redwood, and whispered, 'Morning Glory, Morning Glory.' She swore me to secrecy, and I put five hundred on for her at twenties and twenty-fives. She made other investments afterwards, when she won on the Lincoln, and a bit more two days afterwards, when she won on the Grand National."

"When Abracadabra's number goes up," said Redwood, "with Morning Glory fifth or sixth—that's about where he'll be—it will make a hole in your winnings. And serve

you right."

"We've hedged, and stand to win either way. That is all I am permitted to disclose."

"You can tell him the other thing, Major."

"About Abracadabra, lady fair?"

"Yes."

"I am to hear now," said Redwood, bitterly, "that you've been laying against my horse. I hope you have. Don't

come to me to get you out of the mess."

"When do you think that is likely to occur?" asked Honoria, with quiet scorn. "I am not accountable to you for my actions, and I advise you to be careful in the tone you adopt towards me, Redwood."

"You're enough to drive a man mad," said Redwood.
"Go on with your story, Causton, as I'm bound to hear it.

More little birds, I suppose."

"You've fired straight this time, dear boy. Other little birds come down the chimney, and whisper to lady fair that

Abracadabra will be second in the Derby."

"What wise little birds," sneered Redwood. "But we've heard that sort of thing before. A woman lies in bed the night before a big race, with her window curtain up. Waking suddenly and opening her eyes she sees a star. The next day she relates her dream, and asks what star it was that shone upon her in the middle of the night, and is told it's Mars. That's the name of a horse in the race, and it happens that Mars wins. 'I knew it would,' she cries. 'What a fool I was not to back it! I shall never get such another chance.' It is easy to prophesy after the event. If

by some cursed stroke of luck Abracadabra is second instead first Honoria will be mourning that she didn't take advantage of the tip given to her by her little birds."

"She has taken advantage of it, dear boy. She has accepted fair odds that Abracadabra is second, and second

only. She stands to win a pot on it."

"Indeed! I'll tell you what I'll do, Honoria. If Abracadabra is second in the Derby, I will make you a present of a horse."

"I hold you to your promise," said Honoria. "You are

a witness, Major."

"I am, fair lady."

"Is a witness necessary?" asked Redwood, with suppressed passion. "Did you ever know me make a promise I didn't perform?"

"I do," said Honoria." "Carry your memory back,

Redwood."

His face darkened; he knew to what she referred. They gazed at each other in silence for a few moments and then Honoria turned to the stage, upon which a fresh artist had

just made his appearance.

He was the star of the evening, and the song he was about to sing had been in everybody's mouth for weeks past. Men had reeled through the street singing it tipsily, errand boys had whistled it, policemen had hummed it on their nightly beats, it had been accepted as a charm, and its effect had been to considerably shorten the odds on the favorite for the Derby. In point of literary merit it was no better and no worse than the generality of such effusions, but it had brought additional popularity to the already popular singer, who had sung it night after night in three different music halls, the audiences in which had taken up the refrain with that unanimous enthusiasm which is a common feature in those places of entertainment when a song strikes their fancy. A single verse of the delectable stuff will suffice for an illustration, one rhyme being altered by the composer and singer in token of its being trolled out the day before the race was to be run:

"Stake your last dollar,
Pawn your shirt collar—
Abracadabra
Is first past the post.
Beg, steal, or borrow,
Back me to-morrow
Abracadabra
Has got 'em on toast.
Abracadabra,
Abracadabra
Has got 'em on toast."

The audience roared out the chorus at the top of their voices, and when the popular singer turned his back to them, and exhibited the letters of the horse's name so arranged perpendicularly and horizontally that Abracadabra was spelt either way, the laughter and applause became deafening. He was recalled half-a-dozen times, and each time sang a fresh encore verse which he had prepared for his admirers. At length he was allowed to retire for good, and the audience calmed down somewhat.

During this excitement Honoria had sat back in the box, in such a position that she could not be seen, and when comparative quiet reigned in the house, she asked Major Causton to call her carriage.

"Going?" inquired Redwood.

"I must get some beauty sleep," was her response.

"May I see you home?"

"Distinctly, no."

"Honoria," he pleaded, "will you always treat me in

this manner?"

"I haven't the least idea what the future has in store for me, or for you," she answered. "You will recollect a certain night when we met in Chudleigh Woods?"

"Why will you always dwell upon that? Have I not admitted my blindness? Have I not begged you a thousand

times to forgive me?"

"I have never told you, I think," she said, "that I was near putting an end to myself that night, nor how I was prevented and saved?"

"No, you have never told me, nor do I wish to hear.

Forget it, once and for all."

"I can never forget it. I can see myself standing on the little wooden bridge, looking down into the lily pond. I can see the reflection of myself—" He had opened a bottle of champagne, and he handed her a glass. She took it from him, and gazed upon the sparkling bubbles, but did not drink. "I will tell you some day. . . . I was in rags, and almost starving. Very different from now, Austin"—a singular smile crossed her lovely lips as she addressed him by the old name—"I beg your pardon, I was forgetting—Redwood, I mean."

"Have done," he cried, tossing off a glass of champagne, which increased instead of assuaging the fever of thirst that was on him. "You have punished me sufficiently for

my fault."

"Do you know," she continued, relentlessly, "that I walked all the way from London to see you—I told you at the time, I remember, and you said, how I must have enjoyed myself. I threatened to expose you, and you asked who would take the word of a thief and a wanton against that of a gentleman? You were right, Redwood. I did not know the world then. I know it now. Yes, I was not only a wanton; I was a thief; and yet you knew well I was neither. Give me your opinion of your conduct."

"It was brutal," he said sullenly.

"It was that, at least; the word is too mild. I was in rags; the soles were worn off my feet; despair was in my soul; death seemed my only refuge!"

"For God's sake," he cried, "talk of something else!"
"But I want to remind you, Redwood," she said, putting down her untasted glass of champagne. "You said the little comedy in which we played the principal parts was finished. Why, Redwood, it was only the first act that was over; even now it is not finished.'

She was suddenly interrupted. From the stage came a scream of agony, answered by shrieks from the pit. Instinctively they moved to the front of the box.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

THE cries of pain and alarm were caused by an accident to a small band of acrobats who had been doing their "turn." Two athletic men, lying on their backs with their legs raised in the air, had been tossing a diminutive boy from one to the other on the soles of their feet. The most difficult part of the boy's performance consisted in his being sent flying upwards by one of the men, and in his alighting in a standing position on the soles of the other man's feet. Before he alighted he had to turn a double somersault. He had twice missed his mark, and as it is a point of professional honor not to relinquish an act till it is accomplished, the boy was sent flying in the air a third time. But the little fellow by this time was exhausted and bewildered, and after turning the first somersault and a part of the second he fell in a heap, his head striking the stage. Having given utterance to his sharp scream of agony he became insensible. The answering shrieks in the pit had proceeded from his mother.

When Honoria and Louis Redwood reached the front of their box, the two elder acrobats were bending over the boy, the curtain was being lowered, the mother was clambering over the pit seats towards the stage, and the whole house was in confusion. The doctor in the opposite private box, which was on the pit tier, had made known that he was a medical man, and was being assisted along the cushions to the stage.

Honoria, who had been behind the scenes of the Royal Palace of Pleasure, knew that the wretched dressing rooms of this music hall could only be reached by means of a long narrow spiral staircase, and that it would be a matter of time and difficulty to carry the sufferer to a place where he could be properly attended to. She said hurriedly to Red-

wood,

"Let him be brought up here; there is better accommodation and more room."

Redwood disappeared through a door at the side of the box which led to the stage, the free privilege of going behind the scenes and mixing with the performers being generally granted to those who occupied the principal box in the Palace of Pleasure.

Honoria, after seeing that the sofa in the adjoining spacious room was free, waited at the door, through which, presently, the boy was carried. The doctor and his friends, the woman from the pit, and the two acrobats in their tights and fleshings, accompanied him. While the boy was being attended to, the manager of the music hall made his appearance upon the stage, and said he was happy to inform the audience that the lad was not seriously injured, and that the performance would be continued; and immediately afterwards the band struck up the tune of one of the most popular songs of the day.

"Is he much hurt?" asked Honoria, of the doctor.

"A rib is broken," was the answer. "It will be best to take him to a hospital."

But against this proposal the woman from the pit, who was the boy's mother, violently protested. The boy should be taken home to her own lodgings, she said, and no one else should nurse and look after him. They strove to persuade her to adopt the more sensible course, but she would not be persuaded, and as her right to decide could not be disputed they were compelled to let her have her way. It appeared that the boy, a mere child about eight years of age, was comparatively new to the business, and had been hired out by the mother, a very poor woman, to the two acrobats, against whom nothing could be urged except that they were following a dangerous occupation. They were very much concerned at the accident, and were ruefully contemplating the prospect of having to break their engagements.

"You said there wasn't a bit of danger," said the mother to them, with flaming eyes, "when you persuaded me to let you have him. I wish I'd bit my tongue off before I

said yes."

"It ain't our fault, mother," said one of the men. "You jest ask him when he comes to whether we knocked him about, and whether he didn't like us. If he'd been my own brother he couldn't have been better treated. It licks me

how it ever happened."

Redwood wondered at the interest Honoria was taking in "the confounded affair," but he did not venture to express himself to that effect. The gentlemen from the opposite box all inwardly commended Honoria, and if any one had hard thoughts of her they were much softened by her behaviour on this occasion. Redwood had opened a couple of bottles of champagne in lieu of something better to do, but only he and the two acrobats drank. A little brandy for the lad had been sent for.

"How's he getting on?" asked the manager of the hall,

coming into the room.

"He'll get over it," replied the doctor, "with care and good nursing." He rose to his feet, and said to Honoria, "I can do nothing more for him at present. He should be got home and put to bed as soon as possible."

"Will it be a long job, sir?" inquired one of the

acrobats.

"It is impossible to say," replied the doctor, "but he will not be fit for your kind of work again."

The men nodded gravely, and took their departure. "I will take the poor fellow home in my carriage," said

Honoria to the mother, "if you won't mind."

"Mind, miss!" exclaimed the grateful woman. " God bless you for it. You've got a heart, you have."

"Will you come with us?" asked Honoria, addressing

the doctor.

"If you wish," he said.

"I shall feel obliged. It will be a relief and a satisfaction to his mother. Excuse me for saying that I make myself responsible for everything." These last words were uttered to him aside.

"There will be no expense so far as I am concerned," he said, gazing with curiosity and interest at her. "I shall be happy to attend to him till he is able to get about

again."

"You are very good."

The doctor turned to his companions, with whom he had promised to spend the evening. They were to sup with him after the entertainment was over.

"We will follow in a cab," said the soldier, "and wait

outside for you."

Honoria glanced at him, and the color came into his face. It was he who carried the boy down to the carriage, and lifted him in. The mother and the doctor then stepped in, and after them Honoria.

"What are we to do, lady fair?" inquired Major Canston, who stood with Louis Redwood at the door of the

carriage.

Redwood was sullen and savage; Honoria seemed to

ignore his existence.

"I am not at all interested in what you do," said Honoria, as she gave the mother's address to her coachman, who drove away at a slow pace as he was directed, in order that the boy should not be jolted.

Major Causton looked at Louis Redwood, and burst into

a loud laugh.

"Damn you," cried Rockwood. "What are you laugh-

ing at?"

"At myself," said Causton, heartily, "and you, and her, and the world in general. She's an original. I shouldn't wonder if she turned Sister of Mercy in the end. That woman, Redwood, is capable of anything."

"If ever I get hold of her again," muttered Redwood,

"I'll make her pay for it."

Major Causton lit a cigar, and Redwood followed suit.

"She's a match for half a dozen of us," said the Major, eyeing his companion thoughtfully. "I've seen something of women, but she puzzles me. Hanged if I can make out whether she's bad or good at the bottom."

"You have nothing to complain of," observed Redwood; "you are in favor just now. It's Major this, and Major that, and Major tother with her all the time I happen to

be by."

"That's where it is," rejoined the Major, "all the time

you happen to be by. She plays me off against you, dear boy. Don't you see? She's got you tight by the gills, and she knows how to play her line if ever any woman did. She has cost you a pretty penny, Redwood. That's where I have the advantage of you. You are rich; I am poor. I get my sport for nothing."

"Sport, you call it!" exclaimed Redwood, savagely.

"Infernal torture, that's what it is."

"You take things too seriously, dear boy. Look at me.' Nothing puts me out. Lady fair smiles at me; I smile in return. She frowns at me; I shrug my shoulders. Be easy with her, as I am."

"I can't; it's not in my nature. When I set my heart upon a thing I can't help showing it. I grow savage, reck-

less, and I'm carried on against my will.

"You're changed from what you were, dear boy. Not long since it would have been hard to match you for coolness. Now you're losing your head, and all through a woman. I say, what did you mean by saying if ever you get hold of her again! That 'again' opens a chapter of past history. Was there ever anything between you and lady fair?"

"That's my business. Mind your own."

"Thanks for the hint. I will. And that reminds me that I'm in a tight fix just now. Cleaned out at baccarat last night, and my I. O. U.s flying all over the shop. Can you spare fifty, dear boy?"

"I'll give you a cheque for it," said Redwood readily.

"You're a prince with your money, dear boy," said Causton admiringly. "It is right that men like you should have it to spend. But don't go the pace too fast. For my sake, dear boy, for my sake. Can't afford to let you get knocked over; should mourn it deeply. What do you stand to lose on your horse to-morrow?"

"Nothing. The horse can't lose. How did Honoria get that infernal stuff into her head about Morning Glory

being first and Abracadabra second?"

"How does she get anything into her head? Do you suppose she takes me into her confidence? It may look

like it, but it's not the case. I've been taking the odds for her on both events—there was no harm in that. If I hadn't done it she would have shown me the door, and got some other fellow to do it."

"You might have let me into the secret," said Redwood,

gloomily.

"Didn't dare to, dear boy. She swore me to secrecy. I give you my honest word, she made me take a Bible oath to it. It would have been dangerous to throw out a hint to you, dear boy. You can't keep your own counsel; you would have let the cat out of the bag. She's drawn you out a dozen times without you knowing it, to discover whether I'd been blabbing."

"I dare say you're right. It's true, I suppose, about the

money she stands to win on her fancy?"

"True as gospel, dear boy."

"She must have got a tip from some one. Have you

any idea of the man?"

"I've no idea at all on the subject. She's got any number of tips from any number of people. All of us have. It's what brings so many of us to grief. My impression is that she is acting on her own fancy entirely, and she's not quite a fool, dear boy."

"She's a fool in this matter, as she'll find out before this

time to-morrow."

"Well, the loss won't hurt her much," said Major Causton; "either way she wins a good stake. I suppose Beane's all right."

Beane was the name of the jockey who was to ride

Abracadabra.

"Damn him!" cried Redwood. "Who can tell? There's about one in ten of the whole lot of them that a man can feel safe with. They're too much for us in the long run, Causton."

"They are, dear boy. Here we are at the club."

As they stepped to the door a man in a maudlin condition passed by, singing—

"Abracadabra,
Abracadabra,
Abracadabra
Has got 'em on toast."

"There's fame for you, dear boy," said the Major, laughing.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

"THE little fellow is comfortable now," said the doctor, "and I think he will do very well."

"Will you come to-morrow, sir?" asked the anxious

mother.

"Yes, I will see him in the morning. I will drop in on my way to the station. You are going, I suppose?" put this question to Honoria as he drew on his gloves.

"To the Derby?" she said. "Oh, yes."

"I saw the owner of Abracadabra in your box. say the horse is certain to win."

"That is what he says himself. Have you backed it?"

"I throw away a few sovereigns every year," he replied, with a smile, "on the Derby and the Leger, but I never put them on till the morning of the race."
"I fancy Morning Glory," said Honoria.

"Do you? I shall divide my investment, then."

"Good night," said Honoria, holding out her hand.

"Can I not see you to your carriage?" "No; I shall remain here a little while."

They shook hands, and he went down to his friends,

who were waiting for him in the street.

"That woman is incomprehensible," he said to them as they walked away. "I never witnessed greater kindness than she is showing to those poor people. They have made a good friend in her."

"One has only to look in her face," said the soldier, "to know what she is. You promised to relate her history."

This to the editor.

"To a certain extent it is wrapped in mystery," said the editor, "which makes it all the more piquant. What I know of it is from hearsay. You must promise not to quarrel with me."

"I promise," said the soldier. "I can believe as much

of it as I please."

"To be sure you can. I am not certain as to when Honoria appeared in our social firmament, but she has been common talk for some time past. Where she hails from no one appears to know. It is said that Mr. Redwood, the owner of the favorite for the Derby, could let in a light upon it if he chose. Whether that is so or not I cannot say myself. She appears to be on intimate terms with him."

"If I am a judge of signs," said the soldier, "he appears to be forcing his company upon her. It is evident to me

that she regards him with aversion."

"That may be. Nevertheless, scandal couples them together, and there is no doubt that he is pursuing her with his attention."

"By the way," interrupted the doctor, "she advised me to back Morning Glory to-morrow."

"I shall take her tip," said the editor, "believing Mr. Redwood to be capable of any trickery."

"I am with you there," said the soldier.

"Of course you are. He is not the only victim to her charms. There are a dozen infatuated gentlemen ready to throw their fortunes into her lap. I am not in a position to say that she gives them encouragement; if she holds them off it makes the pursuit the hotter, as probably she knows."

"I cannot commend you for fairness," said the soldier, who was listening with evident impatience and disapproval. "You assert that you are acquainted with particulars, and in proof of this you are regaling us with tittle-tattle. You have heard this, you have heard that. You are not in a position to say this, you are not in a position to say that, and yet, upon such an admission of ignorance, you make remarks which tend to place this lady in a bad light. It is a fashionable method of blasting character."

"My dear sir," said the editor, with mock solemnity,

"would you turn a deaf ear to the voice of scandal?"

"An absolutely deaf ear," replied the soldier, indignantly, "when the strongest evidence that can be brought to support it is the kind of stuff which you retail out."

The editor was nettled. "Have you ever seen a lady in such a position as you have seen Honoria this evening?" he asked.

"You mean," said the soldier, "occupying a private box in a notorious music hall, in the company of men of doubtful reputation? I admit I should not like to see my sister there, but I believe that ladies of whom you would not presume to speak disrespectfully have been seen in music halls in the society of men not famous for morality. There were plenty of respectable women in the Palace of Pleasure, in pit and gallery and circle; why should the circumstance of one appearing in a private box make her infamous?"

"There is no arguing with this modern Don Quixote," observed the editor, recovering his good humor, "whose chivalrous defence almost converts me. But, indeed, I am by no means unkindly disposed towards Honoria, and I am inclined to overlook her faults because of her virtues and her commendable qualities."

"Let us have a review of these," said the soldier.

"Report says that when she first burst upon society she was not remarkable for education. Since that time she has undergone a most wonderful improvement. Engaging capable tutors, she has learned to play, to sing, to draw, and to speak modern languages, no worse and no better perhaps than the ordinary modern young lady of fashion."

"That falsifies the presumption that she has a vicious mind."

"I thoroughly agree with you. It is not her mind, but her antecedents"—

"Of which you know nothing."

"The antecedents which vague rumor ascribes to her, and also the style in which she lives, keeping horses, carriages, servants, have contributed to the scandal which, justly or unjustly, attaches to her name. On the other hand, it is known that she is charitable; she gives to the poor, she contributes to deserving institutions. Upon the whole, if I commenced with the intention of traducing

Honoria I have made a bad case of it, as you will admit. She puzzles me, as she puzzles many others, and if she ever comes to grief I, for one, shall be sorry to hear it. I hope," he said, turning to the soldier, "I have made amends."

"What you have said," replied the soldier, "strengthens the good opinion I have of her. There is not a lady in the land who could have acted more kindly than she did towards that poor lad who met with the accident. And now you must all come with me, and have a bit of supper."

And the incident being thus pleasantly terminated, they plunged into other topics upon which there was no diverg-

ence of opinion.

These gentlemen were not the only persons who were talking together on this night of Honoria and the unveiled story of her life. Our old friends, Mr. Millington and Mr. Barlow, were among the audience in the Royal Palace of Pleasure. They had come in late, just as the accident occurred, and had seen Honoria lean forward over her box.

"There's Honoria," said Mr. Barlow, "and Mr. Red-wood with her. She is sending him away. What for, I

wonder?"

They soon learned the reason. The news of Honoria's kindness quickly passed through the house, and reached their ears.

"She's a trump, that woman," said Mr. Barlow. "I saw her carriage in front. Let us go and see what she's

up to."

Mr. Barlow was a privileged person; he had free admission to many places of entertainment, the Royal Palace of Pleasure being among them. By virtue of this privilege he conveyed Mr. Millington to the back of the boxes, and there they witnessed something of what has already been described, and heard the rest. Without being themselves observed they followed Honoria and the boy's mother, and the little band of gentlemen who had been present while the doctor was attending to the little fellow. Standing near the carriage they heard the address of the poor woman given to the coachman—No. 7, Wellington street. South Lambeth.

"That's curious," said Mr. Barlow, as the carriage drove away. "Was it No. 7, Millington?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Millington, "that was the number.

Why is it curious?"

"I'll tell you presently; it will interest you."

His attention was now centred upon Mr. Louis Redwood and Major Causton, who were standing on the kerb, looking after the carriage. He had heard the Major's laugh and

Mr. Redwood's angry exclamation.

"She has left them out in the cold," said Mr. Barlow, chuckling, "and friend Redwood is ready to cut somebody's throat. There's an instance of retributive justice, Millington, whether you believe in it or not. The man who made Honoria what she is, and would have laughed to see her starve and rot, would give every shilling he has in the world to make her his slave again. Just look at him. It's a pleasant face, isn't it?"

"You don't believe he has any hold on her now?" asked

Mr. Millington.

"No more than I have; less I should say. It's she that's got a hold on him. She has been playing with him ever since that night we saw her at the theatre, when he made up to her and she gave him a look I can see now. It was when you gave up the Haldane commission, you know."

"Yes," said Mr. Millington, "I remember the night. You took me in the afternoon to Rotten Row, where Honoria

was riding."

"That's the time. From that day to this she's been leading him a dance, and she has played her game so cleverly that he has become almost desperate. Who would have thought she had such a head? I would give something to see her ruin him completely—and it's on the cards, Millington, it's on the cards."

"Why doesn't he give her up?"

"He can't. He has never been fought in this way before, and the longer the battle goes on the madder he grows, and the keener his longing to become her master once more. He has been able to do as he liked with other women, but this one keeps him at bay. I call it a fine revenge." "She takes his money, I've heard," said Millington.

"She does, and laughs openly in his face all the time. It's my opinion she would like to see his horse beaten to-morrow. There's nothing that woman wouldn't do to humiliate and madden him. Millington, I've a fancy to go to 7, Wellington street, just to reconnoitre. Will you come with me?"

"With pleasure. George is out courting, and will not

be home till late, so I shall not be missed."

"Ah," said Mr. Barlow, "that's a long engagement between him and pretty Rachel Diprose. We haven't been much together lately, you and I, Millington, and we have plenty of things to talk about. They're pretty constant to each other, those two, but is it likely ever to come to

anything?"

"I hope so," replied Mr. Millington, "and so do they, of course. Though, for obstinacy, and sticking to her word, there's not a girl within a hundred miles of us to equal Rachel. Says George to her, 'Don't let us wait any longer, Rachel. I'm in a position to maintain a home, so let us go to church, and get it over.' 'No, George,' says the steadfast young woman, 'I've made a vow never to get married till my dear mistress is settled, and I mean to stick to it. You're a foolish fellow to keep yourself tied to a girl like me. Look out for another wife, George, and let us shake hands and say good-bye to each other.' Of course George won't listen to anything of the sort; he makes himself as cheerful as he can be under the circumstances, and says that nothing but death shall part them. Miss Haldane does her best to persuade Rachel to do as George wishes, but Rachel won't give way. And so it goes on. I don't like to see George and Rachel wasting the best part of their lives, but it can't be helped, it seems. There's no understanding women, Barlow."

There's no understanding women, Barlow."

"It's difficult, I grant," said Mr. Barlow, contemplatively; "they have ways of their own, but they're not always wrong. How is Miss Haldane getting along?"

"She and Rachel make just enough to live upon. suspect she would be in sore straits if Rachel left her."

"That's what makes one admire Rachel. It's hard lines for George, but if the marriage ever comes off, she'll make him a rare good wife. How is Miss Haldane's sweet-

hearting getting along?"

"About the same as Rachel's. Young Mr. Parton, you know, went to Australia to make his fortune, and came back poorer than he went. He is going to make a great name one day, they say, but at present he and his father just manage to rub along. But when things are brighter with them, which I've an idea will be the case before long, Miss Haldane's promise to her father that she will not marry without his consent, is likely to stop the way. Everything," said Mr. Millington, passing his hand across his forehead with an air of vexation, "seems to be in a tangle. I give up thinking of them sometimes."

"Talk of the devil!" cried Mr. Barlow, looking after a

man who was crossing the road.

"What's the matter?" inquired Mr. Millington.

"This is a night of coincidences," replied Mr. Barlow, and I believe in coincidences. Do you see that gentleman there?"

"That one shambling along on the other side? What

of him?"

"It is Mr. Haldane himself. He has come back. What

little game will he be up to now?"

Mr. Millington ran across, and passing the gentleman spoken of without drawing attention upon himself, returned to Mr. Barlow.

"It's Mr. Haldane, sure enough. You know more about

him than I do. Let me into the secret, Barlow."

"There isn't much of a secret about it," said Mr. Barlow. "When the Chudleigh estate fell into the hands of Mr. Redwood, our fine gentleman there made himself scarce. Went abroad and kept there. Now he's back again."

"He may have been in London some time, for all you

know."

"I think not. Although that commission I was engaged on for Mrs. Kennedy fell through, I have kept myself posted up as well as I could with everyone concerned in it. You remember I thought it the most interesting case I ever had to do with."

"You never told me why it fell through, Barlow."

- "It's soon told. At the time Mrs. Kennedy put the case into my hands she had money. What did the foolish lady do but allow herself to be persuaded to invest the whole of her little fortune in some South American mines. Crash went the concern, and swallowed up every shilling she had. She came to me with tears in her eyes, and said she could not prosecute the matter any further. She was in my debt over £50, and she owes the money still. There being no funds, I could not go on, of course, and there was an end of the affair so far as I was concerned. Of all the men and women we got to know through your commission for Mr. Haldane and mine for Mrs. Kennedy only two have managed to keep themselves afloat-Mr. Redwood and Honoria. It was a terrible come down for the Haldanes, but I've an odd impression that we haven't seen the end of it. Here we are in Wellington street. There's Honoria's carriage waiting at the door of No. 7. That's what I call a coincidence. In that very house lives Mrs. Kennedy and her adopted daughter, Adeline Ducroz. You can't have forgotten those remarkable letters of hers I gave you to read?"
- "It isn't likely I could forget them. How do these two ladies live?"
- "Mrs. Kennedy takes in needlework, and they starve on it."
  - "What does the other one do?"
  - "Drink."
  - "You know what a dipsomaniac is, Millington?"
  - "Yes."
- "That is what Adeline Ducroz is—that is what she was when Mr. Haldane under the assumed name of Julius Clifford, deserted her in Paris—that is what she was when she was wandering through the Continent. She is now irreclaimable. All Mrs. Kennedy's efforts to cure her of the awful habit—which is more common than you suppose, Millington—have ended in failure. But the good lady

has not abandoned her; she has undertaken a terrible responsibility, and does not shrink from it. She works for the lost creature day and night, nurses her, watches over her as well as she is able to, and still hopes against hope. It is a dreadful burden."

"I can imagine nothing more dreadful," said Mr. Millington, "Barlow, if I don't mistake, you once had an idea that Miss Haldane was Adeline Ducroz's daughter."

"Are you of the same opinion still?"

"Upon my word," said Mr. Barlow, looking up at the windows of No. 7, "I hardly know what to think. I have seen Adeline Ducroz on several occasions, and I can see no likeness between them. But Adeline Ducroz as a woman and a confirmed drunkard, and Adeline Ducroz as a young girl in whom the awful vice was absent, must be two different beings. To see her as she is can give one no idea of what she was, and it seems a crime to associate so sweet a lady as Miss Haldane with a creature so lost and degraded. Here is Mrs. Kennedy coming out of the house now.

A gray-haired woman, her face lined with care, issued from the door of No. 7. She carried a bundle, and after an anxious upward glance was walking away when Mr. Barlow stepped forward and accosted her. Not many words passed between them, but Mr. Millington saw Mr. Barlow slip

something into her hand.

"She has just finished a dress for a private customer," said Mr. Barlow, rejoining his friend, "which must be delivered to-night. She is in great anxiety because she fears she may be kept out late. She says she left her daughter asleep, but she is not easy in her mind about her. It is supposed in the neighborhood that they are really mother and daughter. Another proof of her wonderful kindness to the lost woman."

"If she is in a drunken sleep," said Mr. Millington, "it is likely she will not soon awake."

"If she is," said Mr. Barlow. "That's where the doubt comes in. You have no notion of the cunning of these dipsomaniacs. One is never safe with them. The odds are

that she is only pretending to be asleep so as to get her protector out of the way."

"What would be the good of that? She has no money

to obtain liquor."

"Oh, she'll beg, borrow, or steal it, or perhaps take something from the room to sell for gin. Let us be jogging, Millington. We shall do no good remaining here. It is kind of Honoria to stop with that poor little fellow who met with the accident. By-and-by, old fellow, when the account is reckoned up, there's many a good deed will be set down to the credit of the woman that scoundrel Redwood brought to shame. Come along."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

It was very near midnight before Honoria prepared to take her departure. She had done much in the meantime to assuage the mother's anxiety, and to make things easy for her and the injured lad. Impressing into her service a slatternly girl who lived in the house with her parents, Honoria had sent her out half-a-dozen times to purchase what was required. Every time the girl went out Honoria discovered something else that was wanting, and every time she came back she was sent out again to obtain it. The pleasure Honoria conferred by her kindness was nothing compared to the pleasure she derived from administering it. She moved about the room as if she had lived in it all her life, and as if she were quite accustomed to that kind of existence. The mother, who rejoiced in no less common name than Smith, for the most part looked on in wonder at Honoria's proceedings. The lad opening his eyes once or twice, also gazed in wonder at the beautifullydressed lady until fatigue caused him to close them again; finally he fell into a sound slumber, from which he was not likely to wake till morning. Betweenwhiles Honoria had extracted from Mrs. Smith the whole of her history. She was a widow with one child, and being very poor had

consented to let the acrobats have him for a term of years upon an ascending scale of wages, commencing at four shillings a week. The lad was nearly at the end of his first year, and upon his four shillings a week, which she received regularly, and as much charing as she could obtain, his mother managed to live.

"It is a hard life," said Honoria pityingly.
"It is hard," said Mrs. Smith, "but it might be worse. My Jack's spoilt for his trade now, poor boy, by what the doctor said. He was so fond of it, too. He commenced tumbling about when he was two years old, and before he was three I was always catching him standing on his head. He got regularly talked about, and people called him the little clown. Those men got to hear of him, and when they came and offered to take and teach him the business I thought it was as good a thing as could happen to him. "It's hard to know what to do with one's children, but I'm glad he's a boy instead of a girl."

"Yes," said Honoria, looking steadily at the mother,

"you are right to be glad of that."

She listened to a noise without, the voice of some creature shrieking out a song, the words of which were not distinguishable.

"You'd get used to that noise," remarked Mrs. Smith, "if you lived in the house. Don't let it trouble you.

only Mrs. Kennedy's daughter."

"It does not trouble me," said Honoria, "but there is something very pitiful in the sound. Mrs. Kennedy's daughter! Surely not a young girl?"

"Oh, no, a woman nearly as old as I am, but I'm thank-

ful that I'm not like her."

"Is she sober?"

"I don't know. She never is, if she can help it. When she's not sober, she's mad."

"Always?"

"Nearly always. I've seen her two or three times as near in her right senses as she's ever likely to be, and I've fairly started at the change in her."

"In what respect?"

"Well, if you'll believe me, she was more of a lady at those times than any of us. Quiet too, and well-spoken. There was once when Mrs. Kennedy managed to keep her right for nearly a week, and if you'd seen her then you'd have pitied and wondered at her. But there! A kind lady like you would be ready to pity anyone in misfortune."

"Never mind that. What I have done has been to please myself. I am glad I was at the theatre to-night when your

boy met with his accident."

"You mean the music-hall," Mrs. Smith said, and then hesitated. When her son was carried up to the room adjoining Honoria's private box she had not caught the name of the lady who had proved so kind to her, her anxiety rendering her deaf to everything but her boy's danger. The whole of the time Honoria had been with her in the one room she occupied in this humble house she had not addressed her as "Miss" or "Madam," being doubtful which would be right. It was this doubt that caused her to hesitate now, and Honoria, understanding that she had not completed the sentence, looked at her with a smile.

"May I take the liberty of asking," said Mrs. Smith,

"whether you are a married lady?"

"I am not married," replied Honoria, very readily.

"That's what's been bothering me, whether I ought to call you Miss or not. You can't be more glad, Miss, that you were at the music-hall to-night than we've got occasion to be. My boy couldn't help meeting with the accident, I suppose. What is to be, will be; and as it was to happen your being there was a windfall to us-though I can't quite make out, Miss, why you ought to be glad."
"Can you understand," asked Honoria, "that it is a

real pleasure when one woman can help another?"

"You mean, Miss, when a rich lady can help a poor

"If you like to put it that way, yes."

"That's one way of looking at it certainly, but it only proves more and more what a kind heart you've got. There's that Mrs. Kennedy's daughter going it again. Just listen to her."

Honoria stood at the door a moment or two, listening to the wild singing, some words of which came now to her ear.

"Why," she cried, "she's singing a French song!"

"She can do that, Miss, and talk other foreign languages; and so can her mother. It's a sad pity they've come down so low. It isn't half as bad when you're born to it; then you don't expect much, and you get accustomed to things, but to be born well off and accustomed to having everything you want, and then to come down to poverty's door—I can understand how hard it must be, though it isn't my own case. I don't know, Miss, whether you see it as I do."

"Why shouldn't I be able to see it as you do?" asked

Honoria.

"Well, Miss," replied Mrs. Smith, her admiring eyes taking in every detail of Honoria's dress and beauty, "it's easy to see you've never known want."

"Have I not?" said Honoria, with a singular smile.

"Are you something of a fortune-teller, then?"

"I can tell your fortune by the cards," said Mrs. Smith.

"Which is sure to come true," observed Honoria.

The woman laughed. "Sometimes it does, sometimes it doesn't. That's as it happens."

"Never mind the future," said Honoria. "Tell me about the past—my past. I have never known want?"

"I should say that's certain, Miss."

"A lady born?"
"Yes, Miss."

"Just think. Do ladies go to such places as we met in

to-night?"

"Why not, Miss? I'm a respectable woman, poor as I am, and I go into the pit—with an order, Miss; I couldn't afford to pay. You're a lady and you go into the swell parts. Fine feathers make fine birds, they say, and most people believe it. I don't. If you don't know how to wear the feathers, you're soon found out. If I dressed myself as a lady, having the chance that'll never come to me. why, they'd spot me at once. 'You a lady!' they'd

cry. Now there's Mrs. Kennedy and her daughter. Here they are, living upon next to nothing; they've got the worst room in the house, an attic at the top, and I don't suppose after paying the rent, that they've more than six or seven shillings a week to live upon. They've been in want of a crust they have. But for all that, and though they've got no more clothes than they stand upright in—and they've nothing to brag of—you couldn't mistake that they were born ladies, and brought up so. If they were to come into money to-morrow, and the daughter would only keep from drink, they would know how to wear their fine feathers—just as you do, Miss."

"Tell me something more about these poor ladies," said Honoria, earnestly. "Mrs. Kennedy works for a living."

"As hard as the hardest of us, Miss; stops up half the night sewing, when she can get it to do."

"Sewing! Has she a sewing machine?"

"A sewing machine, Miss? Why, where should she get

one from without a farthing in her pocket?"

"I forgot. And she stops up working half the night, stitching. stitching—there's a song about that I dare say you haven't heard of. And though she works so hard the wolf is always at their door."

"That's it Miss. They're happy ones who've never seen

the beast."

"Like me," said Honoria, smiling again.

"Yes, Miss, like you."

"There are a good many charitable societies in London that help deserving cases like hers. Have they done

nothing?"

"I'll tell you something about that, Miss. As to going to ask help herself from a charity, it's my belief Mrs. Kennedy would die first. There's the workhouse, where a body can sometimes get half a loaf of bread if they like to put up with the shame of it; and perhaps some of them that's so driven that they don't know which way to turn would go and beg for that loaf if it wasn't made so hard for them—I mean the getting of it, Miss. There's Government men there giving out the bread that's a disgrace to

the clothes they wear; and it's that, as well as the shame of begging at a workhouse door, that keeps some deserving people away. For most of us, Miss, can't help being as we are; it isn't our fault; we'd alter it if we could, but we can't, so we've got to bear it as well as we're able to. As for going inside the house, I'd die a thousand deaths rather, and so would a many others. Then you speak about societies. Last winter it was, Miss, that things got so bad with Mrs. Kennedy that they couldn't get worse, and some of us clubbed together to help her on over the bitter times. She couldn't well refuse, because she was laying almost at death's door, but she's paid us all back since, Miss, every farthing of it. While she was getting better, just as she was able to move about a bit, a gentleman that belongs to one of these societies comes into the street, and what does somebody do but speak to him about Mrs. Kennedy? 'If you mean half what you say,' this gentleman's told, 'you'll go and see Mrs. Kennedy, and you'll do something for her.' He goes to see her, and he inquires into her case, and if he isn't satisfied that it's a deserving case nothing in the world would ever satisfy him. The upshot of it is, that he makes a proposition to Mrs. Kennedy—not at once, mind you, Miss; after a good many days had gone by, and she might have starved the while; that's the way, I'm told, they do their business and spend half their money—well, he makes a proposition to her. She's to part with her daughter, who's to be put into some institution where Mrs. Kennedy could see her once a month for half an hour—no longer, Miss—'and then,' said the gentleman, 'we'll see what we can do for you.' That was the end of it. I don't say if it had been put another way that anything would have come of it, but there's nothing on earth but death can ever make Mrs. Kennedy part with her daughter. And so they go on, Miss, and so they'll go on till the end comes. Perhaps you know something of the society I've spoken of; it's an organizing society—leastways, that's what they call themselves, I think. To organize charity!" exclaimed Mrs. Smith, with an incredulous and scornful laugh. "That's as much as to say that we're not to have any feelings, and mustn't give a hungry child a slice of bread and butter, or a starving woman a basin of soup, before it's inquired into. I never heard of anything like it in my

life. Did you, Miss?"

"It sounds strange, certainly. I have heard of the society, and I don't approve of it. I must be going now; you must try and get some rest." She slipped a half sovereign into the woman's hand. "Is there anything more I can do for you?"

"You've done all you could, Miss," said Mrs. Smith, with tears in her eyes, "and I don't know how to thank

you."

"Don't try. My visit has done me more good than it has you."

"How can you say that, Miss?"

"I do say it, and mean it."

"It's a pity there's not more like you, Miss."

A smothered sound, half sob, half laugh, escaped from Honoria, but she was quite calm and composed almost in the same breath.

"You may be wrong there," she said, taking up her gloves.

"No, Miss; I'm right; but it's like you to make light

of what you've done. Shall we see you again?"

"Not to-morrow; I shall be busy; the day after."

"You're going to the Derby, Miss?"

"Yes."

"I heard you tell the doctor that Morning Glory 'd win. Everybody I've heard speak of it swears that nothing can beat that horse with the queer name."

"Morning Glory is my fancy," said Honoria, with a

laugh.

"We've put by twopence a week," said Mrs. Smith, "my poor boy and me, to back something with a start for our money. We've got two shillings. I shall put it on your fancy, Miss, if you don't mind."

"Why should I mind? But you can't be running out

in the morning, with your son lying ill here."

"Lord, Miss, it's only just going outside the door.

There's a man we know that walks round on every big race day to take our bets. I can see him from the window here."

"He takes your bets, and keeps your money. Give me your two shillings; I'll invest it for you so that you can't lose."

With a bright look Mrs. Smith took the two shillings from a drawer and handed them to Honoria, who put them in her purse.

"Good night," she said.

"Good night, Miss, and God bless you."

Honoria, closing the door behind her, did not go down-stairs to her carriage, but upstairs to the attic, in which Mrs. Kennedy's daughter was still singing fitfully, but more softly now. The stairs and passages were dark, and she had to feel her way by the balustrade. A human form, lying across the stairs, impeded her progress, and started up as it was touched by her foot.

"Who's that?" a voice inquired. It was the slatternly

girl she had employed to do her errands who spoke.

"I am going up to Mrs. Kennedy's room," replied Honoria.

"Oh, it's you, lady, I'll show it yer."

"What are you lying on the stairs for?" asked Honoria.

"To prevent 'er going out if I can," said the girl, with an upward jerk of her thumb, which Honoria could not see. "Mrs. Kennedy gives me a ha'penny for it. She's a good sort is Mrs. Kennedy. It ain't safe for 'er to go out by 'erself." With another upward jerk of her thumb.

"Why isn't it safe?"

"She ain't to be trusted a minute by 'erself," whispered the girl. "Mrs. Kennedy's afeerd she might do somebody a mischief."

"Is she violent, then? I understood she was harm-

less."

"She ain't done nothink up to now," said the girl, still in a whisper, "but there's no telling when she's going to begin. And she's that artful!" If Honoria could have seen the girl's face she would seen an expression upon it signifying that for artfulness the woman upstairs had not her equal.

"Show me her room."

"Take 'old of me, and mind 'ow yer step. There's 'oles in some of the stairs. The 'ouse is coming to pieces, it is."

The room was as dark as the staircase, and when Honoria entered it, which she did alone, the slatternly girl keeping by the open door, she could see nothing of its occupant.

"Go downstairs, and ask Mrs. Smith to lend me a

candle."

"Ain't you afeerd?"

"No, go at once."

The girl slid down by means of the creaking balustrade, and presently Mrs. Smith herself came up with a lighted candle.

"You can't do her any good," said the woman, shaking her head.

"Oblige me, and leave me alone with her."

"I'll wait outside."

Honoria taking the candle from her, closed the door.

A woman, crouching by the miserable mattress on the floor, peeped cunningly through her fingers as Honoria approached her. She was much older than Honoria had supposed her to be; her clothes were of the poorest description, but bore evidence of neat mending and patching; her gray hair, also, though she had it pulled over her face, where it hung straggling down, must have been regularly combed and brushed. The room was clean and tidy; it was a work, living, and bed room, all in one, and contained, for furniture, but two wooden chairs, a deal table, and the bed on the floor, but there were no traces of disorder apparent. In the dumb signs that met Honoria's eyes there was no degradation, but distinct evidences of poverty bravely borne. The degradation was in the woman's face—a bloated face, with swollen cheeks and lips, and bleared eyes. The hands she held before it trembled and twitched; they were not the hands of one accustomed to menial work; they were small and shapely, and in the woman's whole appearance, miserable and degraded as it was, there seemed to Honoria to be a singular assumption that she had not been always so low and vile as at the present time.

"Are you ill?" asked Honoria, pityingly.

The woman slowly removed her hands from her face, stroked Honoria's dress.

"Let me whisper to you," she said.

Honoria was startled by the voice. It was so thick and guttural, and so difficult to understand, that it sounded scarcely human.

"Speak out," said Honoria, "there is no one near."

"There is," said the woman. "A devil is hiding—there in that corner!—he will come out when you are gone. He must not hear. Let me whisper." Honoria bent her head. "Are you a lady?"

"I am a woman, as you see."

"Have you got money?"

"Yes."

"Give me a shilling. They starve me; they don't give me anything to eat. Give me a shilling."

"I will get you some food."

"I don't want food—I want a shilling. Give me sixpence. Look at me; I am shaking all over. I want medicine; I

can go out and buy it. Give me twopence."

Honoria did not know immediately what to do. She felt that the degraded creature wanted the money for drink, and yet she seemed impelled to give it to her. It was only by an effort that she restrained the unwholesome prompting.

"No," she said, "I will not give you money."

The woman was evidently accustomed to such refusals; she threw herself full length on the floor, her face down-

wards, and begged no more.

Honoria lingered a few moments in the room; she was sincerely desirous to relieve the poverty so plainly visible, but she could not do it through this lost creature. On the mantelshelf she saw a little stone bottle of ink, and a pen by its side; there was also a worn blotting pad as she

supposed. She took it down and opened it. There was neither writing paper nor envelope there; in their place was a photograph which, though somewhat faded, had seemingly been carefully preserved. It was the portrait of a young woman, dark, and full-blooded as she was herself. The sweetness of spring was in the face and eyes, but it needed not that to render it beautiful. It was one of those rare faces which, under fortunate circumstances, would not lose its attractiveness with advancing age. Honoria gazed at it for many moments in silence. This silence alarmed Mrs. Smith, who was standing in the passage, waiting for Honoria. She knocked at the door, and receiving no answer, gently opened it and advanced into the room. Honoria was so absorbed in the picture that she did not turn her head; she had not heard the opening of the door.

"What are you looking at, Miss?" asked Mrs. Smith. Honoria, aroused to consciousness, laid the portrait down. "Oh, the picture," said Mrs. Smith. "You'd hardly believe

it was hers."

"Hers!" echoed Honoria, contemplating the prostrate

form. "Is it possible she was ever like this?"

"It's her picture, taken when she was a young woman, Mrs. Kennedy has shown it to me two or three times. And now I look at you——" But she paused suddenly, and snapped her lips together. "Are you coming down, Miss. You can't do any good here?"

"You were saying," said Honoria, "'and now I look at

you,' but you did not finish."

"It's nothing, Miss. I'll light you down."

"But I wish to hear what was in your mind. Oblige me, and complete the sentence. There can be no harm in it."

"Of course there's no harm in it," said Mrs. Smith, with a curious hesitation, "but it mightn't be exactly

pleasant.'

"Oblige me and say what you were about to say." She took the portrait in her hand again, and held it out to Mrs. Smith.

"I was going to say, if you'll forgive me for it, that it's not unlike you. It's a foolish fancy, and I don't know how it ever came in my head."

"I don't think it's fancy; it struck me as I was look-

ing at it. Is it like Mrs. Kennedy, too?"

"Not a bit. Mrs. Kennedy is quite a different sort of woman. There's a good many that don't believe——"Again she broke off in the middle of a sentence. "We'd best talk downstairs," she said, in a low tone. "You wouldn't think she was listening, but it's my belief she hears every word we say."

"Yes," said Honoria, "we will talk downstairs."

She cast a last compassionate glance at the prostrate woman, and left the room with Mrs. Smith.

"They do say," she prompted—

"That there's no relationship at all between Mrs. Kennedy and the woman she calls her daughter."

"But why should she work for her as she does? Why

does she make herself a slave for her?".

"There's the mystery. We don't worry ourselves about

it. We've got enough troubles of our own."

"Yes, you must have. Can you give me a sheet of paper and an envelope?"

"Yes, Miss."

This is what Honoria wrote:

"One who sincerely sympathizes with Mrs. Kennedy, and is desirous to further assist her, requests her acceptance of the enclosed. In the course of a few days the writer will place herself in communication with Mrs. Ken-

nedy."

The "enclosed" was a bank note for five pounds. Honoria fastened the envelope, and addressing it to Mrs. Kennedy, requested Mrs. Smith to give it to her upon her return home that night. It happened, as Honoria stood in the passage, about to take her departure, that the street door was opened with a latchkey, and a woman was heard ascending the stairs.

"That's Mrs. Kennedy's step," said Mrs. Smith.

"I do not wish her to know," said Honoria, quickly, "that it is I who left the note for her."

"Very well, Miss."

The light fell upon Honoria's face as Mrs. Kennedy came up to her, and a startled look flashed into the elder woman's eyes. She stood on the top of the stairs gazing at Honoria till she passed out of the house.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

Louis Redwood and Major Causton went to a great many places that night, after Honoria had given them the cold shoulder, as the gallant Major expressed it, and did not stop long in any. There was a certain theatre where Redwood, as a particular friend of the manager and lessee, was welcome behind the scenes, as at the Royal Palace of Pleasure, whenever he cared to show his face there, and as a matter of course any friend he took with him was also welcome. Redwood had seen a great deal of life, and was still seeing it, but it was only with its darker shadows that he was familiar. The theatre to which he took Major Causton owed a great deal to him, literally owed a great deal to him, for it was mainly by his cheques that it was kept going. Nowadays many young gentlemen of fashion and fortune think it the proper thing to do to back a young actor who is ambitious to blossom into a star, and in more cases than one the result has been satisfactory. There are other theatres, kept open by a layman's money, in which the end to be obtained is not so laudable, the aspirant therein being an empty-headed female who imagines that a very liberal display of her person will atone for her lack of brains. It was in a theatre of this kind that Redwood and the Major idled away some twenty minutes. To do Louis Redwood justice, he had no particular feeling for the emptyheaded female who ruled over it; he spent some of his money in a theatre of this kind because it was accounted the proper thing to do, as above stated, and because anything of a higher aim, with an intellectual end in view, would not have suited his tastes.

"Why, here's Louis!" exclaimed the female he was backing, when he and the Major made their appearance. "How are you, old chappie?"

Redwood, surveying her with the air of a master who is not too well pleased with his bargain, gave her an indolent

nod, and drawled out,

"My friend, Major Causton."

"Glad to see you, Major," said the female, who was nothing if she was not vulgarly familiar with every man who enjoyed her polite society. She was what is termed a fine woman—that is, there was plenty of her. She was arrayed as Ganymede, and she made it a boast on certain gala nights that it was not stage wine she handed round, but real sparkling champagne. Truth to tell, she had about as much regard for Redwood as he had for her; she knew her reign was coming to an end, but it had served her purpose, for she had "hooked" a brainless swell, who had commenced to waste his fortune upon her, and who would go on recklessly doing so until he came face to face with ruin. This favored one was behind the scenes when Redwood came in, and looked very black at what he deemed an intrusion. Redwood took no notice of him, however, and at the end of twenty minutes left the field.

"So far as I am concerned," he remarked to Major Causton, as they walked away, "the theatre will close next

week. I am about sick of the affair."

"Wonder you ever had anything to do with it," said the Major.

"I made a promise," said Redwood, quietly, "and I stuck to it. I generally do, whatever the cost."

"When you make up your mind to a thing, dear boy, you generally do stick to it."

"It's my way; I never give in."

They were both thinking of Honoria when they made these remarks, and the Major was debating who would win. It was a battle between them, he knew, though he did not quite understand the rights of it. Had he been pinned to a declaration he would have been inclined to back Honoria, for whose intellect as well as for whose beauty, he had an intense admiration.

"From the theatre they proceeded to two clubs, of which both were members. In one a Derby sweep was being drawn, the first prize in which was a thousand pounds. As they entered the room the name of "Mr. Louis Redwood" was called out, and then the horse was drawn-Abracadabra.

"By the Lord," exclaimed Major Causton, "you're in

luck, dear boy."

A murmur ran round when it was seen that the owner was present, and envious congratulations were poured upon him. He took it all very coolly; the lucky draw did not stir him in the least.

"I should have been equally pleased," he said, "if I had drawn a blank. Why did not one of you fellows get

my horse."

"Here is my name called out," cried the Major excitedly. "A blank, of course."

But, no; he drew Morning Glory.

"Three cheers," he said, rubbing his hands. "Will you change, Major?" asked Redwood.

"Major Causton was about to say, "Done," but suddenly pulled himself up. "No, dear boy," he replied. "Everybody will know I've drawn Morning Glory, and it will be almost like throwing Honoria over not to stand by the horse."

"As you please; you will repent it."

"I hope so, for your sake," said the Major, rather ruefully. Redwood's tone was so confident. "I shall be satis-

fied if I'm placed."

Upon leaving the second club they visited Redwood expressed his intention of going home, saying he had had too many late nights the last week or two, and wanted to be fresh for the morning.

"I have to drive Honoria down, you know," he said.
"You might do the amiable, dear boy, and invite me; it will be better than going down by rail."

"O, you can come; there will be room for you on the

drag."

"Thanks," said the delighted Major, always ready to

enjoy himself at another man's expense. By this time to-

morrow night we shall know where we are.'

They parted at the door of Redwood's chambers, where our old friend Simpson, who had taken service with him after Mr. Haldane had gone to the wall, was arranging certain matters for the drive to Epsom. Simpson had changed very little, except that he was slyer and sleeker than ever; his foxlike eyes looked up as his master entered the room.

"Give me some champagne and Apollinaris, Simpson."

"Yes, sir."

Redwood did not usually treat his champagne so, but he wanted a long drink, and it was the most harmless he could take. Simpson waited till he had emptied the glass, and then said,

"There's been somebody here to see you, sir."

"A lady?"

"No, sir, a gentleman," said Simpson, with a sly smile.

"Let him go to the devil," said Redwood.
"Yes, sir," said Simpson, and said no more. He was by this time well acquainted with his master's moods, and never opposed them.

Louis Redwood lit a cigar, and paced the room.

"Everything will be right in the morning?" he said, presently.

"Everything, sir."

"Take care that it is, or look out for yourself."

"Yes, sir."

Redwood was in a brutal humor, but his valet was not to be ruffled. Simpson was quite comfortable; he had a substantial sum in the bank. The service he had taken with Louis Redwood had proved a lucrative one; the wages were good, the perquisites better, the pilferings best. He would not have wept if he were suddenly discharged, though he would have preferred to hold on a little longer. He was still single, but he had a quarry in view, like his master. Strange to say, this quarry was pretty Rachel Diprose, of whom he had lost sight. Her treatment of him had the same effect upon him as Honoria's treatment had upon Redwood: it whetted his appetite. The more she

flouted him the stronger grew his inclination for her, and as her marriage with George Millington had not yet come off, he never quite lost hope. He said to himself, as his master did, "I'll have her yet; and when I get her I'll tame her, and make her pay for it all." He had, of course, backed Abracadabra for the Derby; he had the firmest faith in his master's horse, and thought, with numbers of others, that it could not lose the race. He stood to win five hundred pounds, and looked upon the money as already in his pocket.

"What did you say about a gentleman calling?" asked

Redwood, when he had smoked his cigar through. "He wanted to see you very particularly, sir."

"Anyone I know?"

"Oh, yes, sir; an old friend of yours." He added, under his bated breath, "and of mine."

"An old friend," said Redwood. "Where's his card?"

"He didn't leave one, sir. He left his name."

"What is it?"

"Mr. Haldane, sir."

Redwood stopped in his walk. "He is in England, then. When did he come back?"

"I don't know, sir. I didn't ask him. He said he wanted to see you very particularly, and asked me if you would be home to-night."

"Yes, go on," said Redwood, impatiently. "Don't chop it up into bits. Out with the lot."

"I said, sir, you might and you mightn't, and then he said he would call again, and take his chance of finding you. There's the bell, sir. It might be him."

Redwood reflected a moment. "If it is Mr. Haldane,

show him in."

"Yes, sir."

"And look here, Simpson. When he's here you can pack yourself off. I sha'n't want you again to-night. If I catch you peeping through keyholes and listening, I'll break your neck."

"Yes, sir," said Simpson, and going from the room,

presently returned, ushering in Mr. Haldane.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

"Make yourself scarce," said Louis Redwood to Simpson who, with a look of curiosity at his old master and a subservient lowering of eyes at his new, glided from the room.

"So you've come back to the old diggings, Haldane.

How long have you been here?"

"I arrived this morning," replied Mr. Haldane.

"Made your fortune, I hope."

"Hardly that, Redwood, as you can see."

There were indeed no evidences of prosperity upon him; his insolent and haughty bearing had vanished, and its place was taken by a certain humbleness of manner, in which, however, a timid rebelliousness occasionally asserted itself. That he had been on the downward course was clear enough, but there was still lower depths to reach, of which possibility he appeared to be nervously conscious.

"You don't look very flourishing, I must say," observed Redwood. "Have a cigar? There's a bottle of champagne

just opened. Help yourself."

Mr. Haldane did so with some show of eagerness, which

was not lost upon Redwood.

"Where have you been all this time?" inquired the younger man.

"All over the world, I think," replied Mr. Haldane,

" and bad luck everywhere."

- "You had a good innings," said Louis Redwood, with a spice of maliciousness in his tone. "Life is a game of ups and downs."
- "You've been luckier than I have been, at all events, and there's no chance of a reverse."
- "I'm not sure Haldane. So far as money goes, I don't dispute with you; but my turn may come next."
  "You don't say that?"

"I do say it. Do you remember Lamb & Freshwater?"

"Your lawyers? Yes; I have cause to remember

them. According to what you said, they insisted upon selling me up."

"It was in their hands, you know," said Redwood care-

lessly, "and had to follow their advice."

"You were rich enough to give me another lease of life," said Mr. Haldane, moodily chewing his cigar. "You told me yourself that you were not in want of money."

"I might have said something of the kind, but a bargain is a bargain. You didn't fulfil your part of it, and I didn't

choose to be treated like a dog."

"What could I do? If my precious daughter would not marry you, how could I force her?"

"You managed badly from the first. You had the game in your hands, and you threw it away. But the devil take the past! We were both well rid of each other. I should have been tired of her in a month, and she would have made me sick with her whines and tears. It made me mad to be thwarted, I own; it always does. The harder a thing is to get, the more I want it. It's my nature, and I can't help it. You can't accuse me of lack of perseverance. I might even have continued with your obstinate daughter if another woman hadn't happened to step in my way." His face darkened. "I'm about as successful with the second as with the first; and I'll know the reason why if I'm beaten in the end."

"Who is living at the Hall?" asked Mr. Haldane.

"The Rocks. It has been empty ever since the foreclosure, and Lamb & Freshwater are continually telling me it is eating its head off. You've cost me a tidy sum, one way and another. I'm not exactly the Bank of England, Haldane; that is what my lawyer friends are continually dinning into me lately. 'You're making the pace too hot,' they say, and when I tell them to mind their own business they shake their heads, and speak about pulling up and retrenchment. A pair of black ravens, that's what they are; but I shouldn't wonder if I had to sell Chudleigh, after all. I should have sold it long ago if I could have got my price. I shall be lucky if I see half my money back, the legal croakers say; and what with capital lying idle, and

the loss of interest, I've no doubt they're right. Chudleigh's gone to the dogs since we left it. No trade, no life, no money."

"Redwood "Well?"

"We were friends once, good friends."

"Who's disputing it?"

"I'm down in the world. It is not my fault, but my misfortune, that luck's gone against me. For old times' sake don't turn your back upon me. I'm cleaned out."

"How much will set you up?"

"You're a good fellow, Louis. Could you let me have

a couple of hundred?"

"It wouldn't ruin me. Look here, Haldane, I don't set myself up as a model, and I've a notion that I'm not exactly a favorite with the people I mix with. Hang the lot of them! What do I care for their opinion of me? They'll lick my boots so long as I fling my money about; when I'm broke they won't be able to speak bad enough of me. I know them, the curs! But there's one thing they will never be able to say, and that is that I cared for money. There's my cheque book; fill in a cheque for two hundred, and I'll sign it."

The light in Mr. Haldane's eyes as he wrote the cheque was like the light in the eyes of a condemned man who has been suddenly reprieved. He handed the pen to Redwood, who scribbled his name and threw the cheque across to the

once prosperous gentleman.

"If you think of anything I can do for this, Redwood,"

he said, and paused.

There was genuine emotion in his voice, and his hand

shook as he passed it across his eyes.

"I'm not at all sure," said Redwood, "that I sha'n't call upon you to do something for me. You're going to Epsom to-morrow, of course."

"I thought of going, and putting a fiver on your horse.

You've backed it yourself?"

"To win a pretty large stake. What's more, I've laid against another horse in the race that people fancy."

"I heard 'Morning Glory' talked of."

"That is the horse I've laid against. You can go down on my drag if you like."
"I should be glad to."

"Come to breakfast here at nine. You'll find yourself in a good company when we start. An old friend of yours is going with us."

"Who is he?"

"It's a lady, hailing originally from Chudleigh."
"Not my—"

"Daughter? O, no; this is another kind of lady. Do you remember Honoria?"

"Honoria?"

"A girl from your village, a protege of your daughter once on a time."

"I remember something of the girl."

"Did you ever hear my name mixed up with hers?"

" Never."

"It was kept pretty close. When we first became acquainted she knew me under another name than my own. Not an uncommon trick, Haldane. You've been on the same lay yourself if I'm not mistaken. She has blossomed into a woman of fashion-but you must have heard all about it."

"You forget. I have been absent from England for some time."

"That accounts for your ignorance; but you'll hear enough to-morrow. I'll ask you now to say good-night. I want to go to bed. Take another cigar before you go."
Then the old friends parted, and Mr. Haldane went

away a happier man than he came.

Louis Redwood did not go to bed immediately. He took out his betting book and penciled down how he stood on the eventful race that would be decided in a few hours. Rich as he was reputed to be the result of this race was of some importance to him. If Honoria's tip came off, Abracadabra first, and Morning Glory second, it would make a difference of a hundred and fifty thousand pounds to him. He looked rather grave as he contemplated the figures, but his confidence was not shaken. With a smile of anticipated

triumph he retired to rest.

Meanwhile Mr. Haldane was undergoing an experience. Upon issuing into the street he was accosted by Simpson, who, instead of listening at keyholes, had taken it into his mind to wait for his old master at the street door.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Haldane," he said, "but I thought you might feel inclined for a bit of a chat about

old times as well as new."

To be addressed in such terms of familiarity by a man who had once been his servant was a bitter pill for Mr. Haldane to swallow, but he was accustomed to humiliation, and being in adversity a coward, he made no remonstrance.

"How has the world treated you, Simpson?"

"I can't complain," replied Simpson. "I wish it had

treated you as well."

It was a feature in his offensive familiarity that he was careful not to address his old master as "sir." It was all very well in former days, but now the tables were turned, and it was principally to enjoy a practical illustration of the fact that he sought the interview.

"I am glad to hear you have prospered," said Mr. Hal-

dane, humbly.

"Yes, I could set up as my own master now. Mr. Red-wood spoke to me sharp before you, but that's his way; he hasn't much respect for anybody. I'm thinking of giving him notice."

"So well off as all that, Simpson?" said Mr. Haldane.

"I can lay my hand on three noughts, with a three before them," said Simpson, boastfully, "and then I shouldn't be broke."

"Three thousand pounds! You're a lucky man. How

did you make it?"

"Honestly, and by keeping my wits about me. Mr. Redwood's horses have been a little gold mine to me."

"And to him."

"Don't be too sure of that. Taking one year with another his stable don't cost him less than five hundred a week. He's headstrong, that's what he is. Thinks he's up

to every move on the board, thinks he's a match for jockeys and trainers, thinks he's a match for women, while all the while, if the truth was known, he's made to pay all round by the whole lot of them. He's got a certainty tomorrow though. The Derby's as good as won. Put a bit on Abracadabra, Mr. Haldane."

"Thank you, Simpson."

"It's a pity about Chudleigh, isn't it, Mr. Haldane?"

"Mr. Redwood tells me it is in a bad way."

"Gone to the dogs. You'd hardly know the old place."

"They'd be glad to have me back again, Simpson."

"They'd be glad to have anybody back again. Have you seen your daughter?"
"No."

"She lives in lodgings, No. 5, Pole street, Buckingham Palace road. It is a come-down, isn't it, for all of you? Well, I must wish you ta-ta; I've got to be up early in the morning. I thought it wouldn't look friendly to let you go without having a word with you."

He held out his hand, which Mr. Haldane pretended not

"Good night, Simpson," he said and walked away.

"Proud beast!" muttered Simpson, looking after him. "Wouldn't shake hands with me, wouldn't he? But I showed him I was as good as he was. I'm glad he's come down."

He went up to his room, and before he sought his bed devoted quite an hour to seeking inspiration for the Derby. He wrote on separate pieces of paper the names of all the horses that were being backed for the race, and shaking them up in a hat, drew one forth. Opening the paper he had drawn he read the name on it, "Morning Glory," He smiled, folded the paper, and put it back in the hat, and then began shaking all the pieces out of it till only one remained. Opening it, he read again, "Morning Glory." His second smile was not quite so confident as his first, but his faith in Abracadabra still remained firm. He took up a book from the table, and opened it hap-hazard. The first letter on the top of the page was M for Morning. He

opened another page hap-hazard, and the first letter was G for Glory. He was manifestly disturbed by these silent prognostications, and he began to question whether Abracadabra was really the certainty for the Derby it was pronounced to be. Every description of sporting paper was in the room; he consulted them all. Without a single exception every sporting prophet gave Abracadabra as the winner. He became reassured; it was not possible they could all be mistaken. As a two-year-old Abracadabra had run three races, and this year had been favorite for the Two Thousand, which he won, as he had his other races, with the greatest ease. In his preparation for the Derby there had not been a hitch, not a mishap, not one day's sickness, and it was a well-known fact that the whole stable to a man was on the favorite. Simpson smiled again with returned confidence, and examined his betting book. Yes, he stood to win five hundred pounds, or lose two hundred, on Abracadabra. During his service with Louis Redwood he had become quite a man of the town, and as he often declared, was up to every move on the board; therefore he kept his bets duly recorded in a regular betting book, after the fashion of his superiors. He was not high enough in social station to be a member of Tattersall's or even of the Victoria; but he belonged to the Beaufort, and, as an ambitous man, looked forward to advancement. He was intimate with many of the racing fraternity, and knew that every one of them who had made money had risen from nothing. There were some who could hardly write their names in their cheque books, but they had amazing heads for figures, and as for their histories before they were in a position to drive blood horses and wear huge diamond rings and pins, the least said about them the better. The men upon whose downfall they had fattened were members of old families with old estates which had passed from them, and of new families created by prosperous tradesmen and speculators whose lives had been devoted to the making of fortunes which their children were squandering. Simpson had made the acquaintance of numbers of these rooks and pigeons, and

by dint of natural shrewdness and cunning had managed to pick up a good many stray crumbs which had swelled his banking account to its present respectable figure. But why should he stop at three thousand pounds? Here in his master's horse was his opportunity; it was the chance of a lifetime, and might never occur again. Why should he not turn bookmaker, and, as well as backing Abracadabra, lay against all the other horses in the race? He had often thought of turning bookmaker on his own account, and this Derby, which was "all over but the shouting," would be a capital commencement. With fair luck his three thousand would be thirty before the racing season was over. Debating this question with doubts and fears, now being urged on by the one, now being pulled back by the other, he once more tossed all the pieces of paper together, and drew one out. The last time he did so was with his right hand and his eyes open. This time he closed his eyes and drew with his left hand. Again, "Morning Glory!" What did it mean? Was he to accept this iteration of Morning Glory as a veritable tip? Was it Fate that was whispering to him not to turn bookmaker yet, but to desert Abracadabra, and take the odds to a large amount against Morning Glory? He would try again—hanged if he wouldn't. He smoothed one of the sporting papers in which all the probable starters for the Derby and their jockeys were set down. Then he took a pin, and with averted eyes stuck it in the list. With feverish eagerness he looked at the paper; the pin was sticking in "Morning Glory." He stood for a long time glaring at it; then he tumbled into bed very much disturbed in his mind. The chances of Abracadabra winning the great race were not half as and half as a substitution of the half as and half as a substitution of the half as a substitution o half so good as they had been an hour ago.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

This Derby day was no different from all other Derby days. There were the same tumult and hurly-burly; the

same vast gathering of people of all degrees and conditions in life, peers, statesmen, costermongers, layers and backers of horses, acrobats, tipsters, ladies, courtezans, gipsies, and general hangers-on; the same contrasts of wealth and poverty, of hope and despair, of false hilarity and blank misery. Nature alone made genuine holiday; the sun shone brightly, and touched the surrounding hills and gay dresses of the ladies with shifting light. In its color, animation, variety, and significance, the scene at Epsom on

a Derby day is incomparable.

Of all the motley gathering not one attracted more attention than Honoria. The admiration was bestowed in some quarters openly, in others covertly and envyingly. Men pointed her out to each other, and ladies levelled their opera glasses at her. She was conscious of this general attention, but did not show it. The absence of small vanity in this beautiful creature was remarkable -as remarkable as her possession of absolutely high qualities which, if scandal had not been busy with her name, would have entitled her to the homage which, openly by some, and grudgingly by others, was paid to her. She had driven down to Epsom with Louis Redwood's party, and she wore the mixed colors of Abracadabra and Morning Glory. Redwood would have protested against this divided allegiance if he dared, but the power she wielded over him was due as much to her courage and independence as to her beauty, and he knew it was wiser to be silent on certain matters upon which they differed. When she was not occupied in the paddock and with persons who were executing commissions for her, she held court in her box, bestowing her smiles and favor upon those who thronged round her, in a queenly fashion which strengthened her hold upon them. Mr. Haldane had been introduced to her, and from the moment he saw her his eyes seldom wandered from her when they were near each other. She had awakened within him a memory of the past. The queenly woman reminded him strangely of a woman whom he had betrayed and deserted. Memories also were awakened within Honoria upon Redwood's men-

tion of his name. Since the night upon which she had travelled from Chudleigh to London in the company of Mr. Millington she had not seen or heard from Miss Haldane. She had, as we know, written a letter to her benefactor, to the lady who had saved her probably from death, certainly from despair, warning her of the character of the man who was wooing her; that done, all was at an end between them. She had thought often of the lady who had played the part of an angel in her life of poverty and early shame, but when she became notorious she did not deem herself worthy to approach her in any way. On one side were virtue and purity, on the other, vice and degradation; she acknowledged the position, and cut herself aloof from one with whom she was not fit to associate. She gazed with some curiosity upon Mr. Haldane when he was introduced to her, and noted wonderingly his strange observance of her, in which there was a touch of subserviency. In Chudleigh village he had never bestowed the least attention upon her, and she did not remember that he had ever addressed her. On the road a somewhat significant conversation had taken place between them.

"You have been absent from England for some time,"

she said.

"Yes," he replied, "for some time."

"Since your return," she continued, "have you been down to Chudleigh?"

"No; I only returned yesterday."

"I am wondering whether it is much altered."

"Mr. Redwood tells me that a great change has come over the place."

"That would be the case, of course, the Hall being

empty. It is sad to lose so fine a place."

"I have felt it deeply."

"Mr. Haldane, have you no remembrance of me?" She noticed again the strange look in his eyes.

"You remind me of someone," he said, with hesitancy.

"Of myself," she said, smiling.

"No; not of yourself. May I ask how old you are?"

"Some ladies would be angry with you. I am twenty-

three. You ought to remember me, Mr. Haldane. I am almost a Chudleigh girl. Your daughter was very kind to me."

He winced at the reference to his daughter.

"I hope she is well."

"I do not know; I have not seen her lately."

"Are you not friendly with her?"

"She disobeyed me."

Honoria was but imperfectly acquainted with the details of the relations between him and Louis Redwood, but her natural intelligence enabled her to arrive immediately at a correct conclusion.

"You wished her to marry," she said.

"It is a subject," he said, "I would rather avoid."

"I am very self-willed, Mr. Haldane. You wished her to marry Mr. Redwood."

"It would have been the saving of me, and the making

of her."

"What are you two talking about so softly and mysteriously?" cried Redwood, turning towards them.

"Family matters," said Honoria, dryly. "Do not inter-

rupt us."

"Be careful of her, Haldane," said Redwood. "She is a witch."

"I will make a confession to you," she said, addressing herself again to Mr. Haldane, "though it is hardly that, for I never disguise from myself or from others, what I am. You know the world's opinion of me."

"Oh, the world!" he exclaimed, with an awkward movement of his hands expressing at once that the world's opinion was not worth considering, and that he would

rather not be pressed to give his own.

"Yes, the world," she said; "but it is curious now, that it is only half right. What do you think yourself of the intimacy between me and Mr. Redwood? You hesitate to answer, but your very hesitation is in itself the answer; and yet you are about as right as the world is. Upon the merits of Mr. Redwood you, who have known him so long and so well, must have a very exact estimate. Answer me

candidly. Would he have been a fit husband for your daughter?"

"I cannot discuss the question," he said. He was be-

ginning to be afraid of this outspoken creature.

"It is not a subject for discussion," she said, "because there can be but one opinion. Mr. Redwood would have ruined her happiness and her life, and it is well for her that she did not give him the chance. Why, if he offered to marry me I would laugh in his face."

"Still plotting?" said Redwood.

"Running you down, Redwood," said Honoria. "Taking your character away. I am tearing you to pieces; Mr. Haldane is defending you. Which side will you bet on?"

"Yours; and Haldane, if he is wise, will agree in

everything you say."

"I am trying to bring him round. So," to Mr. Haldane,

"you see you were wrong."

"Right or wrong," he said, moodily, "it is all over now. You have asked me a good many questions; I should like to ask you one." She nodded assent. "You say you are almost a Chudleigh girl. Do your people live there?"

"My people! What do you mean by that?"
"Your parents, your relations?"

"I have neither parents nor relations. Would you believe, Mr. Haldane, that you are talking to a human being who has not a single tie in the whole wide world?"

"I believe whatever you say."

"That is polite of you. It is a fact. To my knowledge there is not a man, woman, or child with whom I can claim kindred. I must bring something to your mind. In the village of Bittern, seven or eight miles from Chudleigh, there lived a woman with a little child. I am not telling you a fairy story, and I shall not treat you to a mystery. The child was myself. I can just remember the woman, of whom I know nothing more than that she was not my mother. How it came about that at the age of six or seven I found myself quite alone in the world I cannot say, but it is true. In the first place, I was deserted by my parents, whoever they may be; in the second place, I was deserted

by the woman who, for some reason or other, had looked after me for a time. Imagine, if you please, a young child thrown by human cruelty into such a position. There is a kind of brutality in it, is there not? Some miserable days followed the second desertion, and how I managed to live is really inexplicable. Then came a day I remember well. I was sitting by a hedge on the roadside, shivering and hungry and in rags, when a carriage came along. In this carriage was a little girl about as old as myself, who was taking a ride with her nurse. This little girl insists upon getting out of the carriage, and she speaks to me, and actually gives me some sweets; and insists, too, upon taking me back with her to Chudleigh. There are some memories that never fade, and this is one. My benefactor, Mr. Haldane, was your daughter."

"I have a recollection of the circumstance," he said. He would have preferred to be silent, the last of his wishes being to encourage a conversation into which his daughter was introduced, but Honoria had paused and looked at him,

expecting him to speak.
"Her kindness," continued Honoria, "did not end there. She took the charge of me upon herself, and paid a woman in Chudleigh for my keep. She was the means, also, of my receiving a better education than was bestowed upon the regular village children, and so, Mr. Haldane, I grew into quite a superior young woman. How I grew into what I am is my affair, and proves my ingratitude to your daughter. I owe her a debt I can never repay and with all my heart and soul I thank God that you did not succeed in forcing her into a marriage with Mr. Redwood. It comes into my mind, Mr. Haldane, that I am indebted to you."

"In what way?" he asked.

"Your daughter must have thrown away a good deal of money upon me, which, of course, you must have given her."

"She had her allowance," said Mr. Haldane, "and could

do what she liked with it."

"Am I right in supposing that you are in rather low water just now?"

"I have had a run of bad luck," he said. There was no refinement or delicacy in his nature; he was ready to accept anything from her.

"Consider me in your debt to the tune of-how much

shall we say? Five hundred pounds?"

"You are too good," he said, with a beating heart.

"Not at all. Indirectly I am your debtor, and I can spare a good deal more than that. I will not give you the money now, because it might be noticed. On the course, when nobody is looking. I have brought a large sum with me, to do some ready money betting with. Then, so far as you are concerned, we are quits. There—we will talk no more about it. Only take my tip. Back Morning Glory."

"Really?"

"Really. I am in luck just now. Everything I touch

turns to gold.

It seemed so. On the first race, the Chetwynd Plate, she netted nearly a thousand pounds, and Mr. Haldane and Major Causton, taking her tip, each won a fair stake. Redwood lost as much as Honoria won. It needed only that Honoria should say that Prince of Tyre would win to cause him to back the two second favorites, Red Cherry and Saint. He would prove to her that she was no match for him in such matters; he would show that he was her master, and that she was playing a game in which she was a novice. Therefore he made a plunge on his fancies, and and backed his two horses against her one at even money for a monkey.

"Blind luck!" he muttered, as Prince of Tyre came in first by two lengths. "But she shall suffer for it on the

Derby."

Honoria smiled calmly on him when the winning number went up.

"You don't believe in luck, Redwood," she said.

"Luck be hanged!" he cried. "Wait for the Derby."

The Derby was the next race, and the course and everybody on it, with the exception of Honoria, was in a state of the greatest excitement. The yelling and shrieking, the shouting of odds, the rushing to and fro, the white faces,

the mad throbbing of hopes and fears, converted the lovely spot into a pandemonium. The party in whom we are most interested went into the paddock to see the horses saddled. They were all in the pink of condition, fit to run for a man's life, and seemed to be aware that they were about to engage in the most important contest of the year. Before Abracadabra's jockey, the celebrated Beane, was weighed in, Redwood drew him aside. No one intruded upon them, but curious eyes watched them and sought to glean information from signs.

"What do you think, Beane," asked Redwood.
"What everybody thinks, sir," replied the jockey. don't believe the horse can lose."

He looked at his employer in expectancy; Redwood

chewed his moustache.

"You are on," he said, "two thousand to nothing."

Beane elevated his forefinger, and a satisfied expression appeared on his face.

"It's a certainty, sir; you can back Abracadabra for all

you're worth."

There was another little confidential and anxious conversation between Redwood and the trainer, the result of which was perfectly satisfactory to the owner. He beckoned one of the commissioners in his employ, and in less than five minutes it was known that he had thrown another heavy commission in the market, and had backed Abracadabra to win a further fifty thousand pounds. The effect of this was to considerably shorten the odds. "I'll take five to four," shrieked the bookmakers. "Fives, bar one." Before you could turn round the betting on Abracadabra was six to four on, and the odds against Morning Glory had lengthened to six to one. Some of the leading bookmakers refused to take the odds on the favorite, and the consequence was that Abracadabra's admirers in many instances had to lay seven to four and two to one. called Major Causton to her side.

"Get the longest odds you can" she said, "against Morning Glory for a thousand. Come back to me im-

mediately."

Redwood, hearing this, exclaimed, "Are you mad?"
"Wait a moment, Redwood," she replied, smiling at him, and she turned aside with Mr. Haldane. you want to say?"

"They tell me it's throwing money away to back any-

thing but the favorite."

"Do as you please with your money," said Honoria; she had given him the five hundred pounds, and the money he had won on the Chetwynd Plate burned in his pocket. He had to bet with ready-money bookmakers; it was known he had come down in the world. "What difference can it make to me whether you win or lose?"

"If you are fool enough to back Morning Glory," said Redwood, intercepting him as he left Honoria, "you deserve to lose every penny you have got. She has been telling you to back the horse, hasn't she? Out with it!"

"Yes, she told me to back it."

"What the devil does she know about horses?" cried Redwood. "Look here, Haldane. Have women ever brought you any luck?"

"They have been my destruction," muttered Mr. Hal-

"Well, then. Follow Honoria, and find yourself in the gutter. Don't come to me to help you out of it."

Mr. Haldane walked away in an agony of doubt; he

did not know what to do.

"Now Redwood," said Honoria, "you want to know if I am mad. Upon my word, I half believe I am; I've got Morning Glory on the brain. It's on the cards that my

fancy will beggar me."

"With all my heart," he said, "I hope it will." And thought, "If I could bring that about she would be at my mercy. It is only because she is independent of me that she is torturing me so. If I could beggar her! If I could beggar her!"

"You are thinking of something wicked," she said, tapping her foot with her sunshade. "Am I looking well

to-day?"

'You are a beautiful devil," he replied, "and I would give all I'm worth to tame you."

"I dare say you would," she said, with a saucy smile.
"We are having a rare fight, you and I. The question is, who will be the victor in the end?"

"You'll be eating humble pie, my lady, before the day

is over."

"That's to be seen. You ought to know by this time how obstinate a woman can be. I have a notion, Redwood, that I can read your thoughts. Shall I try?"

"Yes."

"Well, you are thinking that it would better your chances if you could ruin me."

"You are a witch."

"I offer you the opportunity. I throw down my glove. If you are anything of a man you will pick it up. I dare you!"

She flashed a look into his eyes that almost electrified

him.

"I pick up your glove," he said. "What is the challenge?"

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

Honoria looked around. Although there were numbers of people in the paddock they were all so engrossed in their own selfish affairs that they had no time to notice that she and Louis Redwood were engaged in an unusually animated conversation. A certain measure of privacy was therefore secured, but it did not content Honoria. She made a slight motion of her head, and Redwood followed her as a lamb follows its dam. She conducted him to a remote corner, where there was no chance of their being hustled or overheard.

"Redwood," she said, "do you know I have a great deal

of money?"

"You ought to have," he replied. "You have been a regularly lucky woman this last year. You never back a loser. Boats, dogs, or horses, it's all one to you; whatever you put your money on, wins. Your luck has been dead

in; but mark my words, Honoria, the Derby turns it. I wish you had every penny you're worth on Morning Glory.

"I am game to risk it," she said. "That is my challenge. Morning Glory against Abracadabra for every shilling I

possess.

"You've got a nerve," he said, admiringly; "but it's two to one on Abracadabra, and five or six to one against Morning Glory. If you lost thirty thousand could you stump up?"

"I could."

"And you want me to lay you the odds against Morning Glory. Well, to be honest with you, Honoria, if by some infernal chance you should win I shouldn't be able to raise money enough to settle with you. As for getting such a sum on in the ring at this time of the day it would be an impossibility."

"I don't want money, Redwood," said Honoria, with a bewitching smile, "I want landed property."

"Landed property?"

"Landed property," she repeated. "Women take odd notions into their heads; I've taken one into mine. What has the Chudleigh estate cost you?"

"Cost me!" he cried with an oath. "I'd rather not

mention the sum. It makes me wild to think of it."

"I challenge you," said she, tauntingly, "to lay me the deeds of the Chudleigh estate against thirty thousand pounds of my money that Morning Glory does not win the

He stared at her in blank amazement. "Are you mad?"

he exclaimed.

"I think I am. You haven't the pluck?" Good-bye,

then." She turned, as though throwing him over for ever.
"Not so fast, my lady," he said, with white lips. "No one has ever seen me show the white feather yet where money is concerned. I was thinking more of you than of myself."

"I've no objection to your thinking of me," she said, firing him with another look and a charming smile. "I do

believe you mean it when you say you love me."

"You may believe it. I would sell my soul for you."

"It hasn't a market value, Redwood; Chudleigh has; and mad as I am on this fancy of mine, I'm a business woman. Do you really and truly love me, Louis?"

He thrilled with pleasure as she addressed him by his Christian name. "Haven't I done enough to prove it,

Honoria?"

"Not quite enough," she replied.

"By —!" he swore another oath to emphasise his words. "Here have I been hanging about you ever since you have been in London, adoring you, worshipping you, gratifying every wish, drawing cheques, buying diamonds -Oh, I'm not throwing it in your teeth, my lady; I'm only going through the catalogue—waiting on you hand and foot, making myself a perfect slave, and all I've got for it is a kiss of your hand—"

"When you wanted my lips," she interrupted saucily. She had never looked more lovely; she knew her power,

and was exercising it.

"I want you," he cried, hoarse with passion.

"Who knows what may happen," she asked saucily,

"when I really need a friend like you—when I am ruined? As I shall be if you accept my challenge, and your horse wins the Derby. You could make your own terms. Do you dare?"

"Do I dare?" he retorted scornfully. "The challenge

is made."

"Let us enter it," she said, and she made an entry in her dainty betting book, he doing the same in his. this right, Louis?" She held out her book to him.
"Quite right," he replied.

"You may as well initial it," she said, "and I will initial yours."

The interchange was made, and then they shook hands,

both smiling into each other's eyes, confident of victory.

The paddock was emptying now; all the jockeys had passed the scales, and some two or three were already mounted and making their way to the course; the others were mounting and accompanied by anxious trainers, owners, and backers, were following the leaders; the book makers' touts, having nothing more to pick up in that arena, were in the ring. Honoria and Redwood walked slowly to their box, both apparently cool and unconcerned; they had made the great stake, of which no one was at present aware but themselves, and it was one of Redwood's boasts that he could lose and win a hundred thousand pounds without turning a hair. Nevertheless, although he was completely successful in concealing his feelings, he was inwardly much agitated; so much depended upon the next half-hour; his life's triumph or defeat seemed to hang upon the issue.

"By Jove, you two!" cried Major Causton. "One would think you hadn't a penny on the race. Let me congratulate you beforehand, Redwood. There's no getting a bookmaker to take another fiver against Abracadabra. There he goes. What a beauty!"

The horses were cantering to the starting post, and every eye was noting Abracadabra, and every voice was raised in admiration. A trainer whispered a word to Red-

wood.

"Declined," he said, aloud.
"Sixteen thousand," said the trainer.

"Thanks," drawled Redwood, taking out a cigar. "Not for double the money."

"What is it, Redwood?" inquired Honoria.

"An offer of sixteen thousand for Abracadabra," replied Redwood, "if he wins."

"He will be worth nearly as much," said Honoria, "if

he comes in second by a head."

"Why, of course," Major Causton put in, "in that case the horse is yours. Eh, Redwood?"

"That's so," said Redwood. "I hope my head won't

ache till then."

Two or three asked the meaning of this, and Redwood himself explained it. When it became known that Honoria had such faith in Morning Glory some anxious souls rushed off to back it. These were men who believed in following the luck, and who were aware that Honoria had been having a wonderful run of late.

"They'll not thank you presently," said Redwood, look-

ing after them savagely.

"Redwood and I are having a battle royal," remarked Honoria to Major Causton. He swears by Abracadabra, I by Morning Glory. We have just made a heavy bet on our fancies."

"That is no one's affair but our own," said Redwood, in

surprise.

"I don't know about that," rejoined Honoria, looking through her glasses at the horses going to the post. "Such a bet as we have just made is sure to leak out. There's no keeping a thing secret in these days, is there, Major?"

"It's difficult," said Causton, "if not impossible, with all these gadflies buzzing around. So you've turned book-

maker, Redwood."

"It is a whim of hers," replied Redwood. "She threw

out a challenge, and I accepted it."
"If I lose," said Honoria, "I shall be ruined." "What!" cried the Major. "You are joking."

"Not much of a joke," observed Honoria, "to lose thirty thousand pounds in one fell swoop. That is the correct quotation, I believe."

Major Causton's eyes travelled from her to Redwood, and back again. "You're a pair of bantams. What odds

have you got?"

"Landed estate," said Honoria, quietly. "When I see Morning Glory's number the first to go up I shall be the

mistress of Chudleigh. I refer you to Redwood."

"There's no trusting to a woman's tongue," said Redwood, sulkily. "It's a true bill. And when she sees Abracadabra's number go up first she'll be the poorer by thirty thousand pounds."

Major Causton whistled.

"Then," said Honoria, in her sweetest voice, "I shall have to commence life all over again, and Redwood has promised to be my friend."

"I understand," said Causton. "It's one throw of the dice, and the battle's lost or won. Lady of Chudleigh,

She finished the sentence for him. "Or a poor girl without a frock to her back, as I was when Redwood first knew me."

No further words were exchanged; all their attention was now centred on the horses, which had reached the post. It was not an easy job for the starter; again and again the line was broken before he lowered his flag.

"What's that devil breaking away?" shouted a man

in the rear who had no glasses to assist him.

No one near him replied; it was Abracadabra. In this particular box the on-lookers were too deeply absorbed by conflicting passions to speak. From the near distance below them in the ring came the answer.

"It's the favorite! I'll take seventy to forty!"
"Done!" cried a backer, and the bet was booked.

A sigh of relief escaped from hundreds of the spectators who had backed Abracadabra; the horse had only gone fifty yards, and was now leisurely turning round. Louis Redwood never took his eyes from his Voightlander. A loud shout arose from the vast throng. "They're off! They're off!" And a moment afterwards. "No! False

start!" Abracadabra was the last to pull up.

Major Causton glanced at Redwood, but could read nothing on that gentleman's face. Had Redwood's thoughts been expressed in words he would have heard "Damn him! What is he up to?" But such outspoken utterance would have been considered bad form. In these preliminary movements Morning Glory had behaved admirably, showing not the least symptom of fretfulness or nervousness. The betting on the race was for the most part over; only here and there did a small ready-money bookmaker or a welsher give occasional odds. Once more the horses seemed to be getting fairly in line, and again Abracadabra broke away; and still Redwood's face exhibited no trace of emotion. There was a delay of a couple of minutes, during which Redwood calmly wiped the film from his glass.

which Redwood calmly wiped the film from his glass.

"He takes it coolly," thought Major Causton. "I should be another Vesuvius if I were in his place. Is there any-

thing wrong with Abracadabra?"

There had now been three false starts, and the suspense to many was maddening. For the fourth time a mighty roar rang out, "They're off! They're off!" The two white flags were dropped, one after another, and the bell was rung. A sudden hush fell upon the assembled thousands, each interested spectator following the movements of his own horse with suppressed excitement. Presently, however, tongues became loosened, and remarks were made and questions asked as the horses changed positions. Abracadabra and Morning Glory had both got well off, and were lying about sixth or seventh, Morning Glory being at the favorite's heels. So they ran for three-quarters of a mile. Redwood was quite satisfied with the position of his horse, whose jockey was following out his instructions to the letter, but occupied as he was in watching Abracadabra he cast an uneasy glance now and again at Morning Glory, whose tactics seemed to be to wait upon the favorite about three-quarters of a length in the rear. That Morning Glory should keep this unvarying position till they reached Tattenham Corner was a torment to Redwood, who would have been better pleased to see the horse he feared fall a length or two behind, or even to forge ahead before the real pinch came. The voices of the spectators grew louder as the horses rounded Tattenham Corner. The pace had been a cracker from the start, and now the leaders, having shot their bolt, lost ground at every stride. Up the straight they came, a gaily-colored cavalcade of joy and misery. Abracadabra and Morning Glory were now fourth and fifth, their relative positions being precisely the same as they had been all through the race. The air was pierced with shouts, and screams, and yells. "Ten to one on the favorite! Abracadabra wins! the favorite wins! What about Morning Glory?" They were second and third now; the leader, an outsider succumbed, and they were first and second, and within two hundred yards of the winning post. A chill fell upon Louis Redwood even in the midst of his excitement. It seemed to him as if Morning Glory had not varied an inch in its position towards Abracadabra, and as if Fate were

waiting the final flash of a moment to deal him a heavy blow. Nothing else was in the race but these two horses, their nearest competitor being three lengths behind. A hundred yards only to the winning post, and Morning Glory drew slowly up. "Abracadabra wins! The favorite wins! The favorite! The favorite! Morning Glory! I'll take two to one Morning Glory! Morning Glory! Morning Glory! Abracadabra!" The din was deafening; it was as if Babel had broke loose. Hearts beat almost to bursting, faces flushed, eyes glared, voices were strained till they were in danger of cracking. A man fell down in a fit, foaming at the mouth, but no one paid him any attention. By a stroke of masterly riding Morning Glory's jockey had stolen in between Abracadabra and the rails; Beane had no need to turn his head; he felt the snort of his rival's nostrils; only four strides, and the goal was reached. At the first of these four strides Morning Glory was within half a head of Abracadabra; at the second within a quarter of a head; at he third they were neck and neck. Fortune, fame, reputation, years of pleasure, the degradation of lives, rescue from despair and shame hung upon the last stride of these noble animals, whose jockeys, at the supreme moment seemed to lift them to the winning post, which they passed amidst a scene of indescribable excitement.

"The favorite's won! No, Morning Glory! I'll take odds it's a dead heat! Yes, a dead heat—a dead heat!"

A shrewd, mottle-faced bookmaker leaning against a post made his deep voice heard through all the uproar.

"Two monkeys to one on Morning Glory!"

Redwood heard and recognized this voice, and he knew that when the issue of a race was in doubt it never erred. He did not move however; his eyes were fixed upon the board. Scarcely two or three moments had elapsed since the horses had passed the post, but it seemed an age. The men were waiting on the platform with numbers in their hands, looking towards the judge's box for their instruction. They stooped, and selected a number, and before they fixed it in its place the result was yelled all over the course. The

number was 2. Morning Glory was declared the winner. Abracadabra second.

With a smile on his lips and a curse in his heart, Louis Redwood dropped his glass, and as he put it in its sling he turned to Honoria.

"You have won," he said.

Honoria nodded, and returned his smile.

She was a little dazed, because she did not yet quite realize the situation, but she betrayed very little excitement. In the first flush of his defeat Louis Redwood gave scarcely a thought to the material stake he had lost. It was the probable loss of Honoria that stung him most; she had slipped from his grasp in the very moment of his triumph, and still remained her own mistress, more than ever independent of him. There was yet a hope, however—a slender one, it is true, but it had happened before, and might happen now—that the winning jockey could not draw the weight. He offered his arm to Honoria.

"Coming to the paddock?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied, and placing her hand on his arm walked with him. She could not but admire him for his ease and self-possession. "Are you going to raise an objection?" she inquired.

"Objection, be hanged!" he exclaimed. "The race is

fairly won and lost. How do you feel?"

"I don't know yet; I'll tell you by and by. How do you feel, after such a knock?"

"O, it isn't the money that troubles me," he said. "It's

you. Are we friends still?"

"Why, certainly. What should I do without you?"

There was comfort in this. "You've said it, mind," he cried.

"I've said it," she replied. "It will depend upon your-self"

"In what way?"

"Didn't I tell you I don't know yet? I must have time to get my breath. I've a great deal to think of now. Hunted out of Chudleigh the last time I was there. Returning to it its mistress and lady. There, don't let's talk about it just now. The mere thought of it bewilders me."

"Only one question. Am I invited to the house-

warming?"

"Of course you are. The house-warming! Yes, I dare say I shall give you one. It will be rare fun. You're first on the list."

They met the returning horses at the gate of the paddock. As Morning Glory came in first between the divided line of spectators the jockey and Honoria exchanged a smiling glance.

"Hallo!" whispered Redwood to her.

"O, yes," said Honoria, as if answering a question.
"We have understood each other for weeks past. We each played our own bats, Redwood."

"Where did you get your brains from?" he asked.

"That's the question. I'm a waif and stray, you know."

"You're the loveliest woman in England."
"Especially now," she said, showing her white teeth.

"Especially always," he retorted. "I have never wavered."

"You forget. You did once."

"That belongs to ancient history."

"It was only yesterday. I can see myself at this mo-

ment in Chudleigh Woods."

The jockeys passed the scales, and the voices of the racing touts rang through the air. "All right!" "All right!" Redwood did not exchange a word with his jockey Beane; he believed in his heart that he had been sold.

His disasters did not end here; the day was not yet over. He and Honoria had heavy bets on the next two races, the High Weight Handicap and the Stanley Stakes, and the result was the same. He lost, and Honoria won.

"Your star is in the ascendant," he said.

"I hear you have a notion of giving a house-warming "Is the furniat Chudleigh," said Major Causton to her. ture at the Hall yours as well as the estate?"

"I never thought of that," she replied, and at once

attacked Redwood.

"I will make you a present of it," he said, grandly.

"It is not mine, then?" she asked.

"You did not win it," he said. "What you won was landed property. I should like to lay you under an obligation to me."

"I am under too many already. Besides, I don't wish

to bleed you to death."

"What does it matter?" he muttered.

"Oh, I have a heart, though you may not believe it. No, I will not accept the gift. What do you value the lot at, pictures, furniture, belongings, everything?"

"I am no tradesman."

"But name a sum—a fancy sum, if you like."
"Say five thousand pounds; but I don't sell."

"We'll bet on it."

"Anything you like."

The numbers for the next race, the Juvenile Plate, were

going up.

"Let us try our luck," she suggested. "I'll take odds against evens, and bet you five thousand pounds to everything that is in the Hall."

"I'm content," said Redwood, and the bet was made.

The race was run, and up went the No. 7.

Redwood laughed, and said, "Nicked again. Now you are mistress of everything. If you want a waiter, hire me."

"Upon my soul," said one of the party. "She can't lose,

Providence is on her side."

"I believe in the other gentleman," observed Redwood.
"This is a black Wednesday for me, and no mistake."

### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

It is time to turn our attention to the other side of the picture and it will be a relief to many to leave the seamy side of human nature awhile.

From the day Agnes Haldane left her father's house at

his stern command she had led a life of patient toil. She and Rachel Diprose did not remain long in the lodgings they took when they first came to London; at Mr. Parton's wish Agnes took rooms close to his residence in Westminster Palace road, and thus she had a friend near her upon whom she could rely. His first anxiety was, how they should live? She and Rachel, as we know, had but little money between them, and they set to work at once to solve the problem upon which hundreds of thousands of people in this great city are engaged from the cradle to the grave. Agnes and her faithful maid had many a battle with respect to expenditure. The young lady did not wish to touch Rachel's store, but George Millington's sweetheart would not be denied.

"Bless you, my dear young lady," said Rachel, "what you've got won't keep you a month, and then what are you going to do? You don't want to make me ashamed of myself—you've too good a heart for that. If you don't use my money I'll throw it in the fire, and then, if you please, my lady, you won't be hard enough to turn me away to starve. For that's what it will come to. And even then I'll never leave you. You can call in the police, of course, but I don't think they'll take me up, because you won't be able to make them believe I'm doing anything wrong."

"But, dear Rachel," urged Agnes, "can't you see the difficulty you're placing me in?"

"No, Miss, I can't," said Rachel stoutly, "and that's

flat."

"I insist upon your listening to reason, Rachel."

"I'll listen to anything you say, Miss, but that doesn't mean that I shall agree with it."

"Sit down, Rachel, and hear reason." Rachel sat down

and gazed stolidly before her. "Look at me, Rachel."

"Yes, Miss; but don't break my heart, please."

"You foolish girl, you know I love you too well for that."

"And I love you too well, Miss, if you'll forgive me for saying so, to leave you all alone in this great black city, with its crowds of strangers, and its smoke, and its hard ways."

"I know you love me, Rachel, but you must remember your duty."

"It's what I am remembering, Miss."

"I shall be cross with you if you interrupt me, Rachel."

"Then I won't speak another word, Miss," and Rachel

threw her apron over her face.

Agnes softly removed it, and her fingers touched Rachel's neck caressingly. Rachel caught her young lady's hand, and kissed it and would not let it go. It was only by the exercise of gentle force that Agnes could release herself, for it was manifestly impossible for her to say what was in her mind with the faithful girl hanging on to her hand like that.

"I am afraid," said Agnes, reprovingly, "that you are

very backward in some things."

"Begging your pardon, Miss," said Rachel, boldly, "so are you.

"Tell me my faults, Rachel."

Only too glad for this diversion, Rachel said, "Well, Miss, in cooking, for one thing."

"I fear you are right, Rachel, but I shall soon learn."

"Pray, Miss, who are you going to learn from?"
"Oh, I shall teach myself," replied Agnes, feeling her-

self at a disadvantage.

"It's not possible, Miss. You couldn't learn a foreign language without a book, or a guide, or living in a foreign country. Now, could you, Miss?"

"It would be difficult, I own," said Agnes, who could

not resist a smile at this direct thrust.

"That's where it is, Miss. Cooking's a foreign language to you."

"No, Rachel, it is a very different thing."

"Why, how can you say so, Miss? When I was out yesterday, didn't you try to boil a potato? What came of it ? "

"Not a boiled potato, certainly," confessed Agnes,

laughing outright.

"That settles it, Miss," said Rachel, and would have risen from her chair if Agnes had not forced her down.

"It does not settle it. I shall learn in a little while."

"Three times have you tried, Miss," said the obstinate Rachel, "and three times have you made a-well, I won't say what, of it. It 'll take you years to learn, and do you think I could sit by, and never see a floury one on your plate. No, I couldn't. I should be a murderer."

"A murderer, Rachel! Oh, you foolish girl!"

"Not at all, Miss. To eat 'em as you boil 'em would be the death of you, and it's me that would bring it about."

"Is there any arguing with such a creature?" asked

Agnes, casting bright looks around.

"No, Miss, there isn't." And Rachel tried to rise again, as though the discussion had reached its natural end.

"You will make me angry with you, Rachel."
"Anything but that, Miss," said Rachel, with a deep sigh of resignation, "except leaving you."

"I must speak to you about duty," said Agnes, with an

attempt at severity.

"Very well, Miss. I'm willing to learn, only I must agree first."

"Rachel, my dear, you have a sweetheart?"

"I have, Miss; as good a man as ever stepped."

"He loves you fondly, you fortunate girl, and you must do your duty by him."

"I'm doing it, Miss, by keeping with you."

"Now, Rachel, Rachel!"

"It's true, Miss. If he thought different I'd never look at him again, because neither my George nor any man shall ever make me do what I think is wrong."

"Is it not possible," said Agnes, in her gentlest tone, "that you yourself may be doing wrong in not going to

the home he is providing for you?"

"No, Miss, I don't think it is. The home can wait, and so can George. He hasn't waited for me so long as you think, and if he is satisfied, and I am satisfied, what's the use of talking about it?"

"Rachel, my dear, your George is a man of right feeling and good judgment. I will tell you what I should say if I were in his place. 'Here is my dear sweetheart'-I am

speaking for him, you know—'Here is my dear sweetheart loving me, and ready to come to me, and here am I ready to commence a new and happy life with the dearest girl in the world. But somebody is putting us back, somebody is keeping us from each other, somebody is separating us. That somebody is a selfish lady, who is doing all she can to prevent my Rachel and me from being happy together. She ought to be ashamed of herself to impose upon a foolish, simple girl so.' And George is right, my dear; I am ashamed of myself for acting so. Do you see it as I do?"

"No, Miss," said Rachel, steadily, and somewhat slowly, "if I did I should despise myself; if I did I should not be worthy of any man. O, my dear young lady, you are doing a great wrong by calling yourself selfish, and by thinking what you say. But you don't, you don't! It is enly because you don't think of yourself, but only of me, that you are trying to persuade me to leave you. And it is true, is it, that you are doing all you can to keep us apart? Are you not doing everything possible to bring us together a month or two sooner than we want to be? George knows this as well as myself, and if I was to go to him this very day and say, 'Here I am, George; I have left her, and now you can put up the banns,' I believe he'd turn his back upon me, and curl up his lip, and say, 'I don't want you; you're not the girl I took you for.' That's what you'd be doing, Miss; separating us instead of bringing us together. If you want to do that—"

And here Rachel broke out into tears, and her agitation was more powerful than her arguments. The two mingled their tears together, and so, for a time there was a break in this fond battle of feminine logic. But it was only a break. Agnes renewed it again and again, until at length George Millington himself spoke to her about it, and declared that Rachel was acting with his full and free consent. It must be confessed that the young fellow was somewhat rueful, for the longing to commence the new and happy life was strong upon him, but he spoke up manfully, and whatever opinion Agnes may have entertained of his absolute sincerity she was compelled to give way. Rachel

loved him all the more for his self-denial, and she made it up to him in the tender courtship between them, looking forward always to the bright future in a way (as she told him) she never could have thought of if things had been different.

And now, perhaps it may be supposed that, after the usual fashion of novelists, the story will branch out into a dismal record of the struggles and privations endured by these two brave and obstinate young women. But, happily, there is no need for this, and the writer is not called upon to invent melancholy incidents and episodes to excite the reader's compassion. Struggles they had, but not greater than they could cope with. They had to work for their living as a matter of course. This, when the affectionate contest was ended, they both agreed to. The question was, what kind of work they were fitted for and could obtain, to pay the necessary expenses of board and lodging. They succeeded in getting needlework, but after a month's trial found that it was not only slavery which would make their young lives a burden, but that even then they could not earn sufficient to pay their way. This applies especially to Agnes, who could do dainty, but not rough work, and such delicate labor with the needle as she was fitted for was not to be obtained. It was different with Rachel. Putting down figures and making calculations—you have no idea how business-like they were in their practical consideration of their position—it was found that Rachel with her needle could earn an average of eight shillings a week, and find time as well to do the cooking and housekeeping. Further than this she had no need, for the earning of these weekly shillings, to work after seven o'clock p.m., and this left her evenings free for George—though she would not have him come every day; she limited him to twice a week, which, after a time, was extended to three evenings out of the Then, about Agnes. Assisted by Mr. Parton's limited influence, she actually succeeded in securing a footing in a postal telegraph office, where she proved so valuable an acquisition, that she brought home with her every week no less a sum than eighteen shillings. This, with Rachel's

eight, made up a total of twenty-six shillings, and upon this they lived as happily as they could expect under the circumstances into which they had been plunged.

It had been indicated and plainly stated that these two young women were of an obstinate nature. Obstinate may not be the proper term; say, rather, then, that they were firm in their resolves, and that, having made up their minds as to what it was right to do, they carried out their resolutions with surprising firmness. In this spirit they were equals, and neither could fairly claim the advantage over the other. Instances of Rachel's firmness and remarkable consistency have already been given. We will say a word now of Agnes' conduct in this respect.

Frederick Parton come home from New Zealand, all his castles in the air tumbled down and extinguished. He went out to make his fortune; he came home penniless, and in somewhat feeble health. But the medicine of love, no less than his own manliness and courage, soon restored him, and he put his shoulder to the wheel with a will. Tender and sweet was the first meeting of the lovers, and as tender and sweet was the after communion of two young

souls welded together by pure and true affection.

"I have Agnes to work for now," said Frederick to his father. 'Money separated us; the want of money unites

us. Let us be thankful for poverty."

This was quixotic, but there was a measure of sincerity and absolute thankfulness in it. And shortly after his return to England an astonishing thing occurred. The world, that had been blind so long, suddenly opened its eyes to the undoubted genius of father and son. They painted pictures which were talked of, and the consequence was that they found themselves ascending the ladder. Their paintings were welcomed in the Academy, and the galleries, and they had the satisfaction of seeing them hung. Unfortunately they fell into the hands of picture dealers, not in the first rank, and were beguiled by this crew into mortgaging their brushes three years ahead. Only those who have worked for years, hoping against hope, till hope is almost dead, know how easy it is to fall a victim to these

sharp dealers. But the Partons, father and son, were satisfied. The long struggle was over, and fame was theirs, and fortune would be; and for the present their purses were sufficiently filled for their needs.

But love is impatient, and Frederick pleaded for marriage. Agnes listened, and her heart went out to him, but

the promise to her father held her back.

"He is not in England," said Frederick, "and you do not know in what part of the world he is to be found. How, then, can you obtain his consent?"

"It was a solemn promise," Agnes answered, "solemnly given, and I feel that it is binding upon me. It is my duty

to wait."

He pleaded, but pleaded in vain; she was not to be moved. Thus did she rival her faithful maid Rachel Diprose. All that he could prevail upon her to undertake was that if she could not obtain her father's consent to their union before she was three and twenty, she would ask him to wait no longer. With this he was fain to be content, and Rachel, being informed of her mistress's resolve, communicated it to George Millington, who also possessed his soulinpatience. If he and Frederick Parton had compared notes they would have agreed that their prospective brides had remarkable strength of character and an equally remarkable sense of duty. Setting marriage aside awhile they had much to be thankful for. The course of true love was running smooth, and a bright future lay before them.

# CHAPTER XXXIX.

Honoria became a very busy woman indeed after Goodwood, and the administration of her affairs occupied her day and night. Before Goodwood she had had enough to do, but she conducted her transactions more privately. Apart from these transactions, some clue to the nature of which will in due time be given, she became more than ever a public character. The extraordinary bets she had made

with Louis Redwood leaked out, as a matter of course, and were recorded and commented upon in the society papers. She was spoken of as "the lady of Chudleigh," and the strait-laced portion of society were much scandalized by the news that a woman of more than doubtful reputation had come into possession of an estate boasting of an ancient and honorable record. Of the attacks made upon her she took no notice whatever. That she read them was evident, for the papers containing them were always to be found in her house. Probably she was aware that she had more friends than enemies, and it is a fact that in many quarters, and with thousands and thousands of people who had never beheld her, she was spoken of in terms of genuine admiration. She was as deserving of this admiration as of the fainter censure which pursued her. That her nature was kind and sympathetic and that an appeal to her charity was seldom made in vain were facts which had long been established, but after the Derby she came out in a new character. No public appeal for money for charitable purposes was made without her responding to it, and her name was to be found in every advertised list of subscriptions. A number of miners perished in a colliery explosion, and an appeal for a widows' and orphans' fund was made, under the auspices of the Lord Mayor. "Honoria, £50." The poor-box of a magistrate's court was stated to be empty. "Honoria, £20." The circumstances of a destitute family were brought to light by the harsh and unnecessary summons of a Board School inspector, and some small subscriptions were sent to the magistrate to lift them from poverty. Among these subscriptions "Honoria £5." A poverty. Among these subscriptions, "Honoria, £5." A child's paper asked for help towards a sick cot in a hospital. "Honoria, £10." Other hospitals appealed for funds, and Honoria contributed to all. She made no distinction of race or class, but gave liberally to every one. Like the constant dripping of water, this merciful iteration of her name had its effect in softening the feelings of those who were inclined to judge her harshly; in a certain sense it cut the ground from under their feet, and had an open

comparison of their charity and hers been made it would not have resulted favorably to them. The curiosity of strangers grew apace, and the name of Honoria was in everyone's mouth. An article in a society paper went the round of the press in a more or less abridged form. In this article, which was headed, "Honoria and her Charity," a list was given of the amounts she had contributed to benevolent purposes in the course of six weeks; it totted up to £2,000. "This," said the writer, "is at the rate of £18,000 per annum. And we have it on undoubted authority that her private benefactions are on as large-hearted a scale. Who, after this, will venture to whisper a word against her? She sets a noble example to ladies who pride themselves upon their virtue." In these days of publicity such interesting items as this reach all classes of society, from the highest to the lowest, and in the poorer quarters of the city, especially, Honoria was idealized far beyond her deserts or the deserts of any woman. Thus the measure of her popularity could not but be agreeable to her.

In other ways, also, she continued to excite wonder and admiration. After Epsom came Ascot, and there she won more money, some of it from Redwood, who was beginning to be spoken of with suspicion. The knowing ones said, "It is impossible for him to last long at the pace he is going." After Ascot came Sandown, and her luck continued. Then Kempton, and Sandown again, (she did not go to Newmarket), and finally Goodwood; and at all these meetings she added to her store. As she rose, Louis Redwood fell, but he bore his losses with outward equanimity and composure, and paid up without a murmur. It was true that to do this he was compelled to have sudden and secret conferences with his legal agents, Lamb and Freshwater, at which they invariably looked very grave, and shook their heads after his departure; but their alarm at this drifting of his boat of good fortune did not appear to have any effect upon Redwood, who was as haughty and imperious as ever, and would not listen to expostulations. Clerks were kept up all night preparing deeds, which were

brought to him early in the morning for his signature; and the spendthrift would afterwards be seen in his usual haunts with unruffled feathers and spirits. It was a peculiar feature in his conduct during these disastrous weeks that, adoring Honoria as he professed, he set himself determinedly against her in all matters of chance or skill upon which money was staked. It was only necessary for her to say that she was going to back a horse at such and such a meeting, and he would immediately offer to lay against it. She took the odds from him, saying lightly, "You may as well lose your money to me as to anyone else." "Better," he replied; "but I shall beat you yet, my lady." In her house baccarat and roulette were occasionally played; she backed red, he backed black, and so with other chances. And her good luck stuck to her and his bad luck stuck to him. They did not play for small stakes; large sums of money were lost and won. At Goodwood came some "swashing blows." He had a horse in the Stewards' Cup; he backed it and lost. A two-year-old in the Prince of Wales' Stakes cost him a lot of money. He laughed at these reverses, for was he not going to pull it all back, and more, on the Goodwood Cup, in which his horse was favorite at long odds on. The ring, always ready to strip the skin off a man's back, obliged him by taking the odds from him. Honoria, also challenged, accepted what he offered; and the result was that his horse was beaten by a good two lengths. Honoria looked at him curiously at this last stroke, and for the first time she saw his lips twitch. But he recovered himself almost immediately, and, with a dare-devil laugh, asked her if she was coming to the paddock. On the way, he said-

"Did it ever occur to you that I might one day com-

mit murder?"

"Not exactly that," she replied. "Your courage would

fail you at the last moment."

When she saw him look at the renowned jockey Beane, who rode his horses and who could win for other owners but not for him, she knew what he meant. She herself had a suspicion that Beane was "selling" his master in the

interests of certain bookmakers, and had often wondered why Redwood did not put up some other jockey. She had, indeed, expressed this wonder to him, not imagining that her doubt of the jockey's honesty was sufficient to make Redwood stick to him all the closer.

Meanwhile all Chudleigh was in a state of the greatest excitement. The village was once more alive. Relays of workmen made their appearance, and the old house and the park were put in thorough order. Money was spent freely, and the inhabitants, who had fallen into the dullest of trances, suddenly shook themselves awake and behaved with animation. The landlord of the "Brindled Cow," who, being held back by his wife, the dominant authority in his establishment, had not realized his ambition of setting up a public in London, polished up his pots and glasses, and briskly bestirred himself. For were not his bar and taproom thronged with the men Honoria's agents had sent down to put the place in order for her, and was not his till resounding with the chink of silver and copper? "It is like old times come again," he said, rubbing his hands. "And as sure as I'm alive there's my old friend Simpson!" There was his old friend Simpson truly, holding out his hand to him and asking how he was. Simpson had been lent by Louis Redwood to Honoria, and was in Chudleigh now upon her business and in her interests. There was no newspaper in the sleepy village, and the world's affairs were so far apart from the inhabitants of Chudleigh that they did not trouble themselves about them. They had heard nothing of Honoria coming into possession of the estate; all that they knew was that the Haldanes had lost it, and that the Hall had been empty ever since.

The landlord of the "Brindled Cow" did not find Simpson over communicative; Simpson had been warned not to let his tongue run too freely, and to be especially reticent as to who the new owner of the estate really was. He would have been better pleased if no restriction had been put upon him, but he knew how to extract some tribute in the way of self-importance from the mystery.

"You're the very man we want," said the landlord, after inviting Simpson to a drink. "What sort of a family is it that's coming to the Hall? Is it a large family? Are they going to keep here? Are they rich? Are they free

with their money?"

"Can't answer all your questions," said Simpson, "my position being a confidential one, you know. But you shall see what you shall see. Don't let it go any further, but it's a lady that's now the master. That's between you and me. As for being free with her money, the Haldanes weren't in it with her.'

"That's enough for me," said the landlord blithely.

"There's to be a house-warming," said Simpson; "lots of company; any number of swells."

"That sounds promising. A man might as well be dead as alive in the times we've gone through lately. When are they coming?"

"About the end of August," said Simpson. "Exact date

not fixed yet."

And then, after partaking of another drink at the landlord's expense, Simpson went to the Hall to see how things were getting along there.

### CHAPTER XL.

It was during the second week in August that Honoria met with an adventure. She was shopping in Regent street, and, her purchases made, was about to step into her carriage when the figures of two persons attracted her attention. One was our friend Mr. Millington, the other an elderly woman in rags whom she did not know. Both were gazing at her, but in different ways. Pity, curiosity, and a certain quality of admiration were expressed in Mr. Millington's eyes, and a hungering greediness in the eyes of the woman. This latter might have been caused by the contrast between them, Honoria representing wealth and luxury, the elderly woman representing the uttermost depth of poverty.

Honoria gave her a shilling, and, pausing a moment, beckoned to Mr. Millington, who, till then, had made no movement towards her.

"It is a long time since we met," she said, holding out her hand to him. "Would you mind stepping into my carriage with me?"

"I had rather not," said Mr. Millington. "If you wish

to speak to me you can do so here."

It was a rebuke, and Honoria accepted it as such, but

she made no comment upon it.

"It will not hurt you," she said, "to walk a little way with me."

"No," he replied, "I will do that."

They crossed the road, and Honoria led the way to a quieter street. The raggedly-dressed woman followed them at a little distance.

"Mr. Millington," said Honoria, "you see I do not for-

get your name—I am in your debt."

"I am not aware of it."

"You must remember the night you took me from Chudleigh to London?"

"I remember it very well."

"You paid for my fare, and spent money upon me. I owe you that much, at all events."

"The money was repaid to me."

"By a lady?"
"By a lady."

"It cannot do her any harm if I mention her name.
Miss Haldane?"

"Yes. Miss Haldane."

"Heaven reward her! I showed her great ingratitude. I do not seek to excuse myself, Mr. Millington, and though I do not deserve your respect, it would be charitable to pity me."

"I do sincerely pity you."

"Thank you. Have you seen Miss Haldane lately?"

"I see her frequently."

"Is she in London, then?"

"She has been in London for some time."

"I trust she is happy."

"She is as happy as she can be in her circum-

"You cannot mean that she is poor?"

"If you have any other subject to speak of," said Mr. Millington, "do so, please. I cannot continue this."

"You are right," said Honoria, with a sigh. "Mr. Millington, I think no one in London knows me as I know myself. Even when you say you pity me, you do it only out of compliment, and to save yourself from saying something harder."

"You are wrong: I do honestly pity you."
"I see Mr. Haldane every day," said Honoria, "and he does not mention his daughter's name. I hear he is not friendly with her. It is this, perhaps, that renders her less happy than she should be. In an indirect manner, Mr. Millington, I have shown some recognition of her kindness towards me. It has been my good fortune to be in a position to extend a helping hand to some poor persons, and to distribute a small portion of what has fallen to my share among those who who are struggling with misfortune. is the memory of her goodness that has urged me to this and that will urge to do it as long as it is in my power. It could not come out of my own nature, because I am thoroughly bad. Perhaps you will remember what I say when all the world turns its back upon me-as it did once before in my life—all the world but her. Mr. Millington, I have been thinking lately of writing to you and asking you to do me a service."

"I cannot see in what way I can be of service to you,"

said Mr. Millington, stiffly.

"It may also be rendering a service to two poor women in trouble, though that is not my only motive. I will not go into any further explanation, because you would neither understand nor sympathize with me. I thought it likely that you might recommend me to a reliable person who could obtain some information for me."

"Some information respecting others!"

"Yes."

"You want an inquiry agent?"

"Yes, an honest man.

"There are plenty of them. Why come to me?"

"Because I want a man upon whom I can thoroughly rely. It is a matter so delicate that I would rather not go

to an entire stranger. Will you oblige me?"

"Imust first know the names of the women you refer to," said Mr. Millington. He was not disposed to trust Honoria, and he had a suspicion that she had Miss Haldane and Rachel Diprose in her mind.

"I will tell you willingly. Their name is Kennedy, and they live in Wellington street, South Lambeth."

"Mrs. Kennedy and her daughter!" exclaimed Mr. Millington.

"You are acquainted with them?"

"No, but a friend of mine is, and strangely enough he is an inquiry agent, and in former years did some business for Mrs. Kennedy in connection with Mr. Haldane."

The name escaped his lips before he could check its

utterance. It was Honoria's turn now to be surprised.

"That is very singular," she said, "and it makes me all the more anxious. He may be the very man I want. I beg that you will not refuse me. I assure you

my motive is a good one."

"I will be frank with you," said Mr. Millington. "On the night before the Derby my friend and I were in the Royal Palace of Pleasure, and witnessed the accident to the lad whom you befriended and took to South Lambeth in your carriage. My friend heard you give the addressit was 7, Wellington street, I think—and we followed you there. After you entered the house we saw Mrs. Kennedy come from it, with some work she was taking home." He paused a moment or two before he spoke again. "I will give you his address. His name is Barlow. He took the greatest interest in Mrs. Kennedy's commission, which was only relinquished because she had no money to prosecute it. It is likely he will be glad to take it up again. If he does, and carries it, with your help, to a successful issue, you will be the means of doing justice to one who has been grievously wronged." He wrote Mr. Barlow's name and address on a card, and gave it to Honoria.

"Is he in his office now, Mr. Millington?" she asked.

"I think you will find him there."

"Do you live in the same house to which you took me on the night you brought me from Chudleigh?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. Perhaps you will not mind taking my card. You may wish to say something to me on this or some other matter. Mr. Millington, you have laid me under another deep obligation to you. I am rich; money is no object to me. Should you desire to serve any one and will come to me I shall be more than ever indebted to you."

He stood with her card in his hand looking after her as she walked towards Regent street. So interested and engrossed was he in following her movements that the card slipped from his hand. The raggedly dressed woman who had not removed her eyes from them during the interview,

darted forward and picked it up.

"Yes," she mumbled, reading the name and address, "Honoria. It is Honoria!" A doubt crossed her mind. "But there may be more than one of that name."

"The card, please," said Mr. Millington, but she put her

hand behind her back.

"She is a grand lady—a grand lady! You know her, kind sir?"

"I know something of her. I will trouble you for the

card."

"Don't be in such a hurry, kind sir. She wouldn't thank you for it. What do you know of her? Where she comes from, eh? Tell me that, kind sir."

"Indeed I shall not tell you. It can be no concern of

yours."

"If you won't tell me," cried the woman, "I'll tell you.

What do you say to Chudleigh, kind sir?"

"Come, come," said Mr. Millington, "you are not the only one who knows that. The lady gave you a shilling; here's another for you. Now hand me that card. I want the address."

"So do I, so do I-and my memory ain't as good as it

was. Would you mind writing it down for me?"

Had he not wished to avoid a scene and to get away, Mr. Millington would have refused, so for his own sake, more than that of the wretched woman before him, he wrote the address on the back of an envelope, and recovered the card.

"Would you like me to tell you, kind sir," said the woman, "where she came from before she went to Chud-

leigh? What do you say to Bittern?"

Mr. Millington's memory was not in the same condition as hers, and he recollected that Bittern was the village mentioned by Simpson on his first introduction to Honoria in Chudleigh as being the place she lived in when quite a little child, with a woman who suddenly disappeared and left her to the mercy of the world. Was this the woman? This mental question caused him to tarry awhile.

"Are you a native of Bittern?" he asked.

"No, kind sir."

"Of Chudleigh?"

"No, kind sir. I am London born and London bred."

"But you lived in Bittern a good many years ago, taking care of a child?"

She gave him a Roland for his Oliver. "That is no concern of yours," she said. "I've got a secret to sell. It might be worth money, now she's a fine lady. Who knows—who knows?"

She was hurrying away when he stopped her. "A moment, my good woman. You are not overburdened with money."

"I'm very poor, very poor, kind sir," she whined.

"I will give you," said Mr. Millington, producing his purse, "a shilling each if you will answer two questions, two simple, innocent questions."

It was a tempting offer; these shillings represented fine gold in the eyes of the poverty-stricken woman; and

yet she paused.

"Depends upon what they are, kind sir."

"You did live in Bittern some years ago, and a little child was in your care?"

"That's the two questions," she said, with cunning.

"I mean it as one. The second will follow."
"Yes, kind sir, I did. Give me the shilling."

"Not till you have answered the second question. Was that child—a girl—your own?"

"Was I her mother? No, kind sir. Give me the two

shillings."

He gave her the money, and she went away. He looked after her thoughtfully, as he had looked after Honoria. It was only when she was out of sight that he recollected that Mr. Haldane was the man who, under a false name, had betrayed the woman who was now passing as Mrs. Kennedy's daughter. Had he done right or wrong in recommending Honoria to go to Mr. Barlow? He could not determine, nor could he arrive at any conclusion as to the nature of the interest which Honoria took in Mrs. Kennedy and her supposed daughter, whom he now believed to be Adeline Ducroz. Much disturbed in his mind, he walked slowly home.

#### CHAPTER XLI.

On the 25th of August, Honoria made her entrance into Chudleigh. On the day previous Louis Redwood was closeted with his legal advisers—Messrs. Lamb and Freshwater.

"We are bound to lay these matters before you, sir,"

said Mr. Lamb, who was the spokesman of the firm.

"I suppose there's no help for it," said Louis Redwood, but it is an infernal nuisance for all that."

"It is not quite the way to look at it," responded Mr. Lamb.

"It is the way I look at it," retorted Redwood.

Mr. Lamb was a lawyer of the old school, and a gentleman of the old school. He still wore the frilled shirt and the high stock, and though his clothes were made by a modern tailor, they were of the old cut and style. He would wear no other, and it added to the respect in which he was borne by clients as old, but not as old-fashioned, as himself.

"The vital question now is," said Mr. Lamb, "what is

to be done?"

Mr. Freshwater nodded, and his lips moved. He was mutely repeating his partner's words, "What is to be done?"

"That," replied Redwood, "is a question for you to answer."

"It is a question, sir," said Mr. Lamb, "that we have been asking for several years."

"And a question," said Redwood, "that you have always

answered, and answered satisfactorily."

"Everything," observed Mr. Lamb, "comes to an end."

"Comes to an end," mutely repeated Mr. Freshwater.

It was the part he played in interviews of this nature.

- "A fine estate," continued Mr. Lamb, as Louis Redwood leant back in his chair, chewing a cigar, "wasted, squandered, I may say. A noble fortune which should now be standing at double the amount it was instead of standing at zero.
- "Zero," said Louis Redwood, "has been the ruin of many good fellows."

"Will you look over these papers, sir?"
"Psha! What would be the use? I am perfectly satisfied with your figures. I have never questioned them. If I devote a week to an examination of them, it would not alter the result."

"It would not, sir. They are here, however, for your examination, at any time, or for the examination of any person you may appoint. Have you at the present moment any idea of the extent of your fortune on the day you came of age?"

"At the present moment I have no idea whatever. At the present moment I have only one wish, that the fortune was as great to-day as it was on the day I came of age."

"We echo that wish, sir, with all our hearts."

Mr. Freshwater mutely repeated, "With all our hearts."

"But that," said Redwood, "is a vain wish. Picking

up spilt milk. Quite out of the question."

"Entirely. Your income, in round numbers, sir, when you came of age, was eighty-two thousand pounds. Where has it all gone to?"

" Echo answers," said Redwood.

"It was not our duty to dictate. Simply to advise. Occasionally to remonstrate."

"Time thrown away, I am afraid."

"Entirely thrown away, as to our sorrow we learned. You are aware, sir," said Mr. Lamb, waving his hand with a slow pathetic motion over the table which was strewn with papers, "what these spell now."

"Tell me."

"They spell ruin."

"They spell ruin," mutely repeated Mr. Freshwater.

"Absolute?"
Absolute."

"To the last thousand."

"Perhaps not quite that. There is your estate in War-wickshire, upon which there is only a first mortgage. The property is increasing in value."

Louis Redwood laughed. "I knew there was some-

thing left—always a chestnut in the fire."

"The last, sir, the last."

"I have heard that before. Your friendly interest in my welfare makes you take too melancholy a view. There is something still more besides the Warwickshire estate. Come, confess now, Mr. Lamb."

"What I have done in earlier days affords no criterion.

I assure you there is nothing else left."

"On your honor as a gentleman?"
"On my honor as a gentleman."

"That settles it. A second mortgage, now, on the War-wickshire estate. How much can you raise?"

"I beg you to consider, sir."

"I decline. Money I must have. It is increasing in value, you say. Borrow to the hilt. You have made inquiries, I know, and some sharp fellow is ready to plank the money down. How much?"

"Fifteen thousand," said Mr. Lamb, with a sigh.

"I can break the bank a dozen times over with that amount. But I've a better diggings than Monte Carlo. Doncaster, Mr. Lamb, Doncaster. Do you know what will win the Leger? I do, and I'll put a monkey on for you; but I'm forgetting—you never bet. Not my own horse this time, Mr. Lamb. I can get ten to one, ten to one. Before a month has gone by that fifteen thousand will be a hundred thousand, and when once the ball is set rolling it goes on rolling. It's a mathematical certainty that the luck must turn if you don't desert your colors. Mr. Lamb, borrow that money for me immediately, without a day's delay, and pay it in to my credit. I am going to Chudleigh to-morrow, and shall be at the Manor Hall till the eighth of next month. I will run up to London to sign the deeds, or you can send them down to me. Whichever you please. Meanwhile you can oblige me by paying in to my bank a couple of thousand—say three. Is that understood?" "We can do what you wish, sir; but this will be the end."

"Will be the end," repeated Mr. Freshwater.

"Not by a long way," said Redwood, shaking hands with his advisers. "Never prophesy until you know."

Honoria's entrance into Chudleigh was an event destined to live in the memory of the oldest inhabitant, whoever that may be. With the exception of those who lived at the rectory every man and woman turned out to welcome her. The small windows of the cottages that lined the narrow road leading to the park were bright with flowers, and everything was sweet and fresh and trim. It had been her intention at first to go down by train, but she had been persuaded into adopting the more public entry upon her property, for it was really hers now, and she was the landlady of half the humble cottages she passed.

"It will look like sneaking into the Hall," Redwood

said, "and as if you were ashamed of being seen there."

That remark decided her. How well she remembered every nook and corner in the village, and the last night she had spent there! She was very quiet as she rode along;

there was no pride in her face. Its expression was sad even to sternness, and Louis Redwood remarked it with surprise.

"What has come over you?" he asked. "You are a

changed woman"

"Yes, I am changed," she replied, and her voice was hard and cold. "I have made a strange discovery this last week. I have never till now realized how thoroughly base and wicked a man can be."

He chimed in with her humor. "We are a bad lot," he said, "but we are what we are made to be, I suppose."

"What we are made to be!" she said musingly. "Yes, what we are made to be. Redwood, if a man did you a mortal injury, if he ruined your life and brought you down to the gutter, if through his act people looked upon him with contempt and scorn instead of respect, if by his cowardice and treachery he poisoned your blood and made a shame and a by-word of you, would you forgive him?"

Redwood's face darkened. "Are you thinking of me," he asked, "and do you want me to trap myself?"

"I am not thinking of you, but of another man."

"Then drive him down, and pay the debt you owe him!" he cried savagely.

"I must find some way to do this. Can I count upon

your assistance?"

"There is nothing you bid me do that I will shrink

It was he who was the beggar now, it was he who implored and entreated, and whose fate seemed to hang upon her words, as her fate had once hung upon his. They had changed places. She ruled, and he was at her feet, at the feet of the outcast he had spurned and taunted in Chudleigh Woods.

"You have your revenge," he said, as the women of the village curtseyed and locks were pulled in servile obeisance.

"I take no pleasure in it," she said. "I would like to know what is in their hearts."

"I would like to know what is in yours."

"You may soon."

He caught at the words, twisting hope out of them.

"Do you mean it, Honoria?"

"I have never in my life been more earnest—and that must content you. Don't pester me with questions; I must work my mood out my own way, which," she added, with a touch of her old self, "is a wilful way, as you have found out long since."

"You are a witch," he said, "and I was a fool, once

upon a time. But it's never too late to learn, I hope."

"I have a little surprise in store," she said, presently, "for some who will be my guests this week at the Hall, and I shall have a little secret which I must keep to myself till the time comes to reveal it. You have promised your assistance. If you fail, or cross me, I will never speak another word to you. Remember that."

He repeated his assurance of obedience, and then they

talked of other matters.

The following day the guests began to arrive, and Honoria welcomed them as though she had been born into the state in which she so strangely found herself. There was no awkwardness in her manners, and she and those she had invited were quite at home with each other. Mr. Haldane was there, and feeling himself called upon to play a part as strange as that of Honoria, he succeeded in concealing his feelings. His worldly condition had not improved. His passion for gambling kept him poor, and on three separate occasions Honoria had lent him money. He was in need of a loan now, but Honoria held off somewhat, and told him he must wait.

"You shall have more than you ask for," she said,

"before our party breaks up."

He smiled his thanks, and she suddenly turned her face from him to conceal the expression of repugnance which flashed into it at his fawning, But though he did not see it he thought her manner strange, and he spoke of it to Redwood.

"She is in a queer temper," said Redwood; "she told me so herself. Leave her alone; she'll soon come round."

The guests were all mon; there was not a famale among

The guests were all men; there was not a female among

them; men of the world, men about town, drawn together by a certain magnetism, and behaving decorously and with propriety, and yet with a freedom which would not have

obtained in the restraining presence of ladies.

On the first night of this gathering an incident occurred of which only one of the guests was cognizant. All the men, with the exception of Major Causton, were playing cards or The hour was eleven, and the excitement of the gambling kept the men together. Outside on the lawn Honoria and Major Causton were holding watch.

"You will not betray me," said Honoria.

"As a man of honor and a gentleman," said Major Causton, his hand on his heart, "your secret is mine, and

shall not pass my lips."

Her own lips curled when he made this reference to himself as a gentleman and a man of honor, but she was satisfied with his assurance. She was to pay him well for such services as she needed from him. If he betrayed her his purse would be so much the lighter. To an impecunious man this fact was a sufficiently strong chain.

"Hark!" said Honoria. "I think I hear them."

It was the sound of wheels she heard. The sound came closer, and at a signal from Causton, who had gone forward, a carriage with the windows down stopped within fifty yards of the house. Two women, one supporting the other, alighted from the carriage, and Honoria stepped lightly up to them, and passed her arm round the weaker of the two. The hall door was open.

"See if all is safe," said Honoria to Major Causton,

"and wave your handkerchief if no one is about."

The handkerchief was waved, and Honoria and her companions passed into the house, and ascended the stairs to the left wing, the apartments in which were devoted solely to Honoria's use. On the top of the staircase Honoria turned towards Major Causton, who was standing at the oot. She put her finger to her lips. Causton nodded, and he three women went into their apartments.

#### CHAPTER XLII.

On the following day none of the guests saw their hostess. Neither at breakfast nor at dinner did she make her appearance, and the men looked at each other and asked Mr. Haldane and Louis Redwood the reason of her absence. These gentlemen, however, could give no satisfactory reply to the inquiry, being as much in the dark as their companions. Privately they questioned Simpson, who knew little, but suspected much. Accustomed to pry slyly into matters which did not immediately concern himself he had ascertained that there had been sent into Honoria's apartments more than sufficient food for one person. Honoria had brought with her to the Hall a female servant entirely devoted to her, and upon whose secrecy she could rely. This woman waited upon her mistress, and not one of the other servants was allowed to enter the rooms which Honoria had set apart for her own use. She took the trays and dishes from the attendants who brought them from the kitchen, and waited until they had descended the stairs before she carried the food into her mistress' apartments, and in all her movements the same air of secrecy was observed. Simpson made an endeavor to ingratiate himself into her confidence, but she would exchange no words with him. "Very mysterious," said he to himself, and, his curiosity whetted, he applied himself to the task of elucidating the mystery. He was so far successful as to become convinced that there were other occupants in the left wing besides Honoria and her servant, but his discoveries did not extend beyond this. Such as they were he communicated them to his master Louis Redwood, who could make nothing of them.

"She is beyond me, Haldane," he said. "Perhaps she

has a surprise in store for us."

Mr. Haldane had cogent reasons for wishing to see Honoria. The gambling on the previous night had been heavy, and he had lost a large sum of money, for which he had given his paper, payable on demand. He had no means to meet his obligations, and he depended upon Honoria's half promise to put him in funds. He sent a note to her, and received no reply. However, his creditors did not press him, and on the second night he played with them again, and again lost heavily. During the daytime the guests did pretty much as they liked; smoked, rode, played billiards for small stakes, and made excursions into the woods and grounds. It was not until night that serious play was indulged in. Honoria had privately put every one of them on good behaviour, otherwise the villagers

would very likely have been scandalized.

At noon on the third day the guests, talking among themselves, discussed Honoria's absence, and decided that it was altogether too bad for her to keep herself aloof from them. Redwood mentioned Simpson's suspicions, that she had friends in her apartments to whom they had not been introduced. Simpson was called, and questioned. He had seen nothing, but he had heard voices. "Men's voices?" they asked. "No," replied Simpson, "women's." They agreed that the affair was growing very strange, and one among them suggested that they should send a "round robin" to Honoria, in the shape of a petition, begging her to favor them with her presence, and to favor them, also, with an introduction to the ladies for whom she had deserted them. To this petition, which was signed by all her guests, Honoria returned a reply that she would meet them in the music-room (an apartment specially fitted for large receptions) in the course of a quarter of an hour. They thronged round her on her entrance, but she waved them away with a gesture of command which was instantly obeyed. One end of the music-room was slightly raised, so that, standing there, Honoria, who was above the ordinary stature of women, topped the tallest of her guests by an inch or two. They noted a change in her. During the last few days she seemed to have grown years older; there was a stern expression upon her face, and her eyes, travelling around, dwelt a moment with aversion upon the figure of

Mr. Haldane, who had taken up his position to the left of her. She commenced to speak abruptly.

"It is scarcely courteous of me," she said, "that I should invite you here, and then, as you say, desert you. I hope

there has been nothing wanting."

They answered in various ways that everything was perfection, that her hospitality was princely, that if the Hall were their own they could not expect better treatment, and that the only thing they had to complain of was that she should absent herself from them.

"I had a motive," she said, "which I do not intend to keep from you much longer. You are right in your surmise that I have lady friends in my private apartments to whom you have not been introduced. Only one of the gentlemen present is acquainted with these ladies, and it is scarcely fair that he should possess a privilege from which the others are debarred. I propose to make you all acquainted with them this evening after supper. I take it that you are all men of honor.

They became grave instantly, and nodded. Even the shadiest amongst them did not hesitate to arrogate the distinction.

"It is a delicate matter," said Honoria, "and I believe I shall surprise and interest you in certain disclosures I propose to make to you after dinner. I wish to enlist your sympathies, your manliness, all that is best within you, in the cause of suffering and unmerited misfortune. Who will be my knights?"

They cried with one voice that all would. They had not the smallest understanding of her meaning, but they imagined that she had some amusing novelty with which

she intended to entertain them.

"I wish you," she pursued, "to elect six gentlemen as a Council of Honor, who shall in some sense occupy the position of judges in what I have to disclose."

"Are we not to hear it?" they asked.

"Yes," she replied, "all of you. Indeed, I shall exact a promise that you are all present, and that not one of you shall leave the room till I have finished what I have to say."

"Jove," cried a guest. "It is like a romance."
"A sad romance," said Honoria. "Say, rather, a page out of life's history. Do you all promise to let me do what I wish in my own way, and not to thwart me? I ask it as a favor."

The eldest gentleman there said it was not a favor she asked, it was a right, and that they would pledge themselves unhesitatingly, in testimony of which he called upon them to hold up their hands. Every hand was held up.

"The man who forfeits his word," said Honoria, "is unworthy the name of gentleman. Now if you please, we

will adjourn. We shall meet again at dinner."

"And your lady friends?" they asked.

"You will see them afterwards. We dine at eight. At

ten I shall expect to see you all here in this room.

These words were intended as a dismissal, and they filed out. Two lingered behind, Louis Redwood and Mr. Haldane.

"What is all this mystery about, Honoria?" inquired

Redwood.

"You will learn to-night. I answer no questions now.

Mr. Haldane, I should like a moment or two with you."

"That is an order to me to go," said Redwood, savagely. "Well, it will be all one in a hundred years. Haldane, you will find me in the billiard room."

He swung away in a furious temper swiftly and sure-

ly Honoria seemed to be slipping from him.

"You sent me a note," said Honoria to Mr. Haldane, when they were alone, "asking for money. I did not reply, because you are already sufficiently in my debt."

"But you promised me," said Mr. Haldane, uneasily.

"Not exactly. I think I said that before our party

breaks up you should have more than you bargained for. That can hardly be construed into a promise. Mr. Haldane, do you think you have any claim upon me?"
"Only upon your kindness."

"You have no real claim upon me?"

"None that I know of."

"It is I, perhaps, who have a claim upon you. Do not interrupt me. You will hear stranger things than that before we have done with each other. You lost heavily last night."

"I did, and the night before as well. Ill luck has

dogged me all my life."

"It is unfortunate; and you have done nothing to deserve it?"

" Nothing whatever."

Honoria's fixed gaze brought the color to his cheeks. A scornful laugh escaped her. He could not meet her gaze, and he looked down nervously.

"It must seem strange to you, Mr. Haldane," she said presently, "to find yourself merely a guest where once you

were master."

"Do you think I have not suffered enough without reminding me of it?" he cried, with a movement of despair.

"Others have suffered also; but it is not of this matter I wish to speak just now. You have given your paper for your losses these last two nights."

"Have they been blabbing about it?" he asked sulkily. "It has reached my ears. How much have you lost?"

"Eight hundred pounds."

"And you owe me six. That makes fourteen hundred. It is the price I am willing to pay for something I will purchase of you."

Mr. Haldane caught his breath, and a moment afterwards said bitterly, "I did not know I possessed anything

of such value. I should like to hear what it is."

"You have a daughter in London, Miss Agnes Haldane,

of whom we spoke a little time ago."

"If she were my property," said Mr. Haldane, in a brutal tone, "I would sell her to you for that sum with pleasure."

"Of that I have very little doubt," said Honoria, steadily. "Anyone acquainted with your history would

give you credit for just so much feeling."

"You are safe in insulting me," he remarked.

"Between you and me there can be no question of insult. We have an account to settle, and when it is settled the balance against you will be one you cannot wipe off,"

He thought she referred to the money she had already given him, and he was silent, conscious that, apart from this fourteen hundred pounds, he was humilatingly in her debt. Then it occurred to him that one of the ladies in her private apartments to whom they were to be introduced that night might be his daughter. He put the question to her, and she answered plainly that his daughter Agnes was not in Chudleigh.

"So you will not sell," she added, and turned as if about

to leave him.

"You have not told me what it is you wish to buy," he

said, quickly, stepping before her.

"It is simply your consent to Miss Haldane's marriage with Mr. Frederick Parton, the gentleman she loves and to whom she is engaged."
"Oh, that!" he exclaimed, with a frown. "You seem

to know a great deal about me."

"More than you are aware of," she rejoined.

time is valuable. Do you sell?"

It was imperative that he should pay the debt he had incurred, and there was no other way. Clear once more, there was still a chance, his credit remaining good, of his winning a big stake from the men with whom he was in association.

"I sell," he said. "I presume you will yourself convey

this precious consent of mine to my daughter."

"I shall have nothing to do with it," she said. "You will write a letter to her, removing the ban you placed upon her happiness I stipulate that my name shall not be mentioned."

"I will write to her in the course of the day, and I will

send the letter when I obtain her address."

"You will write to her now, in this room, before you leave me. I will give you her address."

"You do not trust me; you will not take my word?"

"Good God!" she cried, striking with her hand the chair by which she was standing. "What woman would, knowing what I know?"

He turned white to his lips. Passing his hand across

his forehead he raised his eyes to her face, upon which horror and contempt were expressed. The face of the woman he had betrayed and degraded rose to his mind. Appalled by the memory of his treachery, he whispered,

"Who and what are you?"

"Write the letter," she said, pointing to a table, upon which were writing materials. "What I purchase of you to-day for fourteen hundred pounds will not be worth four-teen pence to-morrow."

He spoke no more, but moving to the table, wrote the

following letter, which he handed to her:

"My dear daughter,—You gave me a promise that you would not marry Mr. Frederick Parton without my consent. I am pleased now to give you my consent to your union with that gentleman.—Your affectionate father,

"C. HALDANE."

Honoria read the letter, and handing it back to him,

dictated the address which he also wrote.

"I will see that it is delivered. Here is a cheque for eight hundred pounds, and my receipt for the money you owe me."

In silence he took the papers from her hand, and with

a last cowardly look at her left the room.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

Not one of those present in the music room of the Manor Hall on this night was likely ever to forget the scene of which he was a witness; upon some it made an indelible impression. During the hours before dinner there had been a great deal of conversation with respect to what Honoria had said to them in the morning, and they asked one another for an explanation of the mystery. No satisfactory information, however, could be given by any of the

guests, although Honoria's statement that there was one among them who was acquainted with the ladies to whom they were to be introduced was frequently quoted. Louis Redwood was questioned, and declared that he knew nothing whatever of them; Mr. Haldane declared the same; but both these gentleman were stirred by an uneasy feeling that the surprise Honoria had in store for her guests was destined to be in some way unpleasant to themselves. Major Causton, who was known to be in Honoria's confidence, was also closely questioned, but he declared upon his honor that although he knew of the presence of two strange ladies in the house, he had no idea who they were, and had, in fact, not seen their faces. Honoria's desire that six of their body should be elected as a council of honor was much discussed; they laughed at it rather, but felt bound to carry out her wish. The difficult point to decide was whom should they select. Eventually it was decided that the election should be by ballot, and among the six gentlemen so elected were the friends, Louis Redwood and Mr. Haldane. "Bound to vote for you, old fellow," they said to Mr. Haldane, "for you were once master here. Devilish hard luck to lose such an estate."

At the dinner table, where Honoria, as she had promised, made her appearance, she was asked what form the entertainment she had provided for them would take, and her reply was that it would take the form of a story.

story.

"Only a story, Honoria!" protested a gentleman.
"I was in hopes that you were going to give us a romance."

"Some persons might even call it that," said Honoria; but whatever it is you will find it sufficiently inter-

esting."

When, at ten o'clock, all the guests being assembled in the music-room, she made her entrance, a buzz of admiration went round. Her dress, her beauty, her jewels, were the theme of general admiration. "Gad!" cried an elderly roue. "She deserves her position." The names of her Council of Honor were submitted to her, and her eyes gleamed as they rested upon the names of Mr. Haldane and Louis Redwood. She inquired how the selection had been

made, and was informed by ballot.

"Do you believe in fate, gentlemen?" she asked. Some did, and some did not. "There is something like fatality," she added, "in Mr. Haldane and Mr. Redwood being on the Council. They might have to sit in judgment on themselves."

They said that this would make the proceeding all the more interesting, and then Honoria asked them to be seated, and, standing, held up her hand for silence.

"The story I have to tell," she commenced, "is a story of real life. It begins, as most other stories do, I suppose,

with one man and one woman.

"The woman, at that time a young girl, with no experience of the world such as we possess, was living in the home of a lady who had adopted her, and who loved her as a daughter. She was foolishly ignorant and foolishly simple. The man was a man of the world, who I have no doubt had already had many adventures and experiences. He was so clever as to be able to overmatch simplicity, and he succeeded here as perhaps he succeeded elsewhere. A year after they first met they were living together, and were not man and wife."

Their hostess was telling them, so far, nothing new or novel, but to hear the familiar story told in plain, direct language by a woman, and such a woman as Honoria, was an entirely new experience to them, and stirred up feelings which they

would rather had lain dormant.

"Of course," she proceeded, "he had promised her marriage, and of course had not fulfilled his promise. But for a little time she believed herself to be a wife, because he had so far satisfied her scruples as to go through some ceremony with her in a private house which she understood to be legally binding. I have told you that she was a simple, foolish girl, but she is not the only one who has trusted a man's word and has been deceived.

"The ceremony I speak of took place in America, where

the man had followed the woman. Mr. Haldane, may I

inquire if my story is wearying you?"

Mr. Haldane, white and trembling, had involuntarily risen to his feet, but at this direct question he became concious that general attention was drawn to him, and with an attempt to regain his self-possession, he jauntily waved his hand, and resumed his seat. He could not, however, sufficiently command his voice to reply. Honoria continued—

"In England it would have been more difficult to carry out such a deception. In America, where the woman was an entire stranger, he found it comparatively easy. I must mention another circumstance in connection with my story; the man played his part under an assumed name.

"Beginning to be tired of his toy, he returned to England in her company. They lived for a little while in London. From London they went to Paris, and there the woman learned that she was not married, and there a child

was born, a girl.

"And there the man deserted the woman, and left her to perish. From that time until the present moment she has never seen the face of the man who ruined her life.

"I perfectly understand what I am saying. I perfectly understand my position. I know the place I hold in the world, and I am aware that there are shameful points of resemblance between this woman and myself. Pray do not interrupt me, or you will make the task I have set myself, and intend to perform, more difficult than it already is. I am speaking plainly for various reasons, one of which is that our acquaintance ends this night. Thanking you for the trouble I have put you to in visiting this house, I beg that you will to-morrow morning leave me to a duty I see before me.

"I must not do injustice to the man I have spoken of. When he deserted the woman in Paris he did not leave her to die in want. He employed agents, through whom he contributed to her support. He did not think she would live long to trouble him. In this he was mistaken. The

woman is now living.

"But there is a moral as well as a physical death. This kind of death came to the woman.

"Weak, foolish, despairing, she took to drink. You

know what that means. Am I not speaking plainly?

"There is one law for a man, and another law for a woman. The woman of my story fell. The man retained his place. She crawled through the world; he went, smiling, through it. This is called justice.

"I perceive that Mr. Haldane continues to be restless and disturbed. If he doubts my story, if he thinks it is a jest I am playing upon him, let me inform him that I am a

living proof of its truth.

"It has not often happened that a woman, wronged by a man as this woman was, is able to turn the tables upon him. It happens now and here.

"Alone, helpless, degraded, the woman crawled her way through the world. She even lost her child; she was told

it died. It was false. The child lived, and lives.

"I promised to introduce you to two ladies who are living with me here in a state of seclusion. I am about to redeem

my promise.

"Before I do so let me confess that in asking you to elect a Council of Honor I was hardly in earnest. Even if it were not a sad joke I should decline to accept two of the persons you have named. You, and they, will know to whom I refer. The Council, therefore, does not exist, not being competent, as a body, to decide a question of honor. If they were, it would not alter the story I have told you, or the judgment the world will pass upon it."

She moved to the door, and passed through it. Before the excited conversation into which her guests fell could take definite form or expression she returned, accompanied

by two ladies.

One was an elderly lady, whose bearing was distinguished by a peculiar sadness and dignity. The other was a lady, decently dressed upon whose face degradation had set its seal. Her cheeks were bloated, her eyes were bleared, her form trembled and shook, her hands were stretched forth helplessly, pitifully. Had it not been for the support of the

elderly lady and Honoria, between whom she stood, the image of hopeless despair and imbecility, she would have fallen to the ground.

"This is my mother," said Honoria, drawing herself to her full height, "of whose existence I was aware only a few short weeks ago."

They gazed at her and her companions in silent wonder. For two or three minutes no word was spoken. Then

Honoria turned to the elderly lady.

"Mrs. Kennedy," she said, "when my mother, then a young girl, was living in your home, she made the acquaintance of a man known to you and her as Mr. Julius Kindly look around, and tell me if he is present in this room."

"That is he," said Mrs. Kennedy, pointing to Mr. Haldane.

"Infamous! Infamous!"

The murmurs came from the guests. There was not one among them who could have claimed a spotless record, but they were not directly concerned in this adventure, and, being thus relieved, they were not slow in pronouncing judgment. The crime of the exposed man was that he had been found out; for such a crime there is no forgiveness; a man's own peers will unhesitatingly condemn

him when he comes to this pass.

"Yes," said Honoria, "it is infamous. That man is my father, and for that man I entertain a horror too deep for expression. This house, which once was his, belongs now to me. Who shall say that I, being his daughter, have no right here? Who shall say that my mother, who should have been his wife, has no right here? Let him carry away with him the memory of this scene as part of his punishment for his infamous crime. Human justice has failed, but by Divine judgment he stands condemned."

She kissed her mother, and conducted her and Mrs. Kennedy to the door. When those two ladies were gone

she spoke again:

"Mr. Haldane, you sleep not another night under this roof, or under any roof which covers me. You once turned

another daughter, my half-sister, an angel of purity and goodness, from your house, and threw her upon the mercy of the world—as you threw my mother upon its mercy. But her fate is a happier one. I, who am not worthy to speak her name, pray that God will shield and protect her, and make all her future bright and happy! As you turned her from your house I turn you now from mine. Mr. Redwood, you and I have been for some time past playing a comedy—you called it so, I remember. It is finished. The curtain has fallen. From this night you and I are strangers. Gentlemen, farewell. I thank you for your patience. Our acquaintance is at an end."

They bowed to her as she passed from the room—all with the exception of Louis Redwood and Mr. Haldane. Louis Redwood stood looking after her, chewing his moustache; there was a furious light in his eyes, but he knew that he was powerless, and that Honoria, the woman he had betrayed, had triumphed. Mr. Haldane, with his head bowed down, slunk away. Not a friendly word was spoken

to him, not a friendly hand held out.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

Nor more than a mile from Buckingham Palace road stands a little church which still retains something of a rustic air, although it is within measurable distance of the heart of this great city, where the hum of restless, eager life is heard through all the waking hours of the day. An ancient tree has resisted the march of progress, and its branches spread over the pretty porch; birds' nests are there, which have witnessed many a happy mating, and when the snow is on the ground kind-hearted people throw crumbs to the sparrows who find shelter therein. A fitting place, therefore, for a wedding, in winter or summer—indeed, all the year round, for love has no special season, but buds and blossoms without reference to the calendar.

At the present time, which happens to be a sunny day

in early October, a forgotten day in summer which has suddenly put in its claim, to the delight of old and young, there is a little gathering of idle people around the old church, basking in the sunshine, and listening to the twittering of the birds which this forgotten summer day is shamefully deceiving. Two weddings are to be celebrated there, and the idlers are waiting for the wedding parties. While they are chattering below on the roadway, and the birds are chattering above in the branches, with that special lightheartedness which distinguishes such occasions, a woman, plainly dressed and closely veiled, approaches the church, and enters it. No one takes any notice of her, the entire interest being absorbed in the wedding parties, the carriages containing which are just turning the corner of a street about thirty yards away. A murmur passes round. "Here they come-here they come," and the genially disposed idlers form themselves into two lines, with a sufficient space between to allow the important actors to pass through.

There are two carriages, which is rather a disappointment to the spectators, who would have preferred a dozen, or more; but as in the arrangements for the weddings there was no reason why their inclinations should have been consulted they have no reasonable cause for complaint. They soon and quickly solace themselves by staring at the parties. From one of the carriages descend Agnes Haldane, Frederick Parton and his father, and Mr. Barlow. From the other Rachel Diprose, George Millington and his father, and Mrs. Barlow. Mr. Barlow is to give Miss Haldane away, and Mrs. Barlow stands female sponsor to Rachel

Diprose.

There is a difference of opinion as to which of the brides is the prettier, but all are agreed that they are both the very picture of happiness. Perhaps for openly expressed happiness George Millington would take the palm, but joy is flowing in the hearts of brides and bridegrooms alike. Faithful love, tried in adversity and never found wanting, is at length rewarded. The dark days are over, and though winter is near, love's sun is shining brightly and tenderly.

The words which bind each to the other are spoken. The rings are on the fingers, the kisses are exchanged, the names are signed. Agnes opens her arms to Rachel, and the girls are locked in a fond embrace.

"Dear Rachel!" murmurs Agnes, and can say no more,

her heart is so full.

"My dear mistress!" murmurs Rachel.

What need for further words between them? Standing on the threshold of a new life these fair young creatures are the symbols of sweetness and faithfulness.

Rachel is the first to recover herself. She slips to the

side of her George.

"You've got me at last, George," she says, crying and

laughing at the same time.

"And I mean to keep you, Rachel," says George, kissing her again in the church—which I believe is against the regulations.

"But George, dear——'

"Yes, my darling?"

"You were so impatient! I was almost afraid I was going to lose you, and that another girl would stand in my place."

"As if that could have ever happened!" says incredul-

ous George. "Well, dad?"

"Well, my boy?" says Mr. Millington.

That is about all that passed between father and son. How feeble are written words? How eloquent are tones and looks!

Upon Agnes' finger is another plain ring of gold, with a single letter engraved upon its inner surface—H. Agnes looks around the church, and her eyes rest upon the figure of the woman still closely veiled, who had entered before the ceremony. She leaves her bridegroom's side, and goes to the pew in which this woman is standing.

"Honoria!"

"Miss Haldane—forgive me—Mrs. Parton!"

"Not to you, Honoria. I am Agnes!"

"Agnes!"

"Kiss me, sister!"

"God bless you! God reward you!"

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